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W. W. Wharton

THE GREAT EXHIBITION.

FORTY-FOUR SERMONS

DELIVERED IN

EXETER HALL,

ON THE OCCASION OF

THE OPENING OF THE GREAT EXHIBITION,

DURING

THE SABBATH DAYS, FROM MAY TO SEPTEMBER, 1851,

TO WHICH ARE ADDED,

FOUR DELIVERED ON TUESDAY EVENINGS,

BEFORE THE YOUNG MEN'S CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION.

TOGETHER WITH THE

THANKSGIVING SERVICE, on Nov. 6, 1851.

Selected from

THE PENNY PULPIT.

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26.11.67.

THE GREAT EXHIBITION

FOURTY-FOUR EXHIBITIONS

DEMONSTRATED IN

EXCELSIOR HALL

ON THE OCCASION OF

THE OPENING OF THE GREAT EXHIBITION

BY

THE VENERABLE DAY & MONTH MAY TO SEPTEMBER 1851

TO WHICH ARE ADDED

YOUTH EXHIBITION ON TUESDAY EVENINGS

WHOLE YOUNG MINI-CRIMINAL ASSOCIATION

COLLECTED WITH THE

THE UNUSUAL SERVICE on Nov 6th 1851.

SPECIAL FEES

THE EXCELSIOR HALL

TONIGHT

THEATRE & CHORAL SOCIETY

WEDNESDAYS AND THURSDAYS, AND SATURDAYS, AND SUNDAYS, AND TUESDAYS, AND FRIDAYS, AND MORNINGS,

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22.5.96

INTRODUCTION.

THE "GREAT EXHIBITION" of 1851 has now become a matter of history. Among the several interesting and valuable Memorials of that great and unparalleled event, a conspicuous position is certainly due to this Volume of Sermons, delivered in Exeter Hall, by some of the most distinguished Metropolitan Ministers. The gathering together of many thousands of people from all parts of the realm, to behold the attractive spectacle in Hyde Park, afforded a splendid and an unprecedented opportunity, for a laudably zealous effort to benefit the souls of men, and extend the cause of the Redeemer in the world. Accordingly, several pious, earnest, and wealthy men resolved to engage Exeter Hall, for the preaching of the gospel to all such Provincial Visitors as choose to attend. These services were commenced on the First Sabbath in May, and closed on the Last Sabbath in September. Although large expectations had been indulged, the actual attendance was greatly beyond the most sanguine hopes or calculations of the projectors. At almost every service the spacious Hall was completely filled, often crowded; and on several occasions, multitudes were obliged to retire, access to the building being utterly impossible. It is calculated that not less than *one hundred and thirty thousand* people were thus enabled to hear the proclamation of the pure and simple "Gospel of the Kingdom," "without money and without price;" and who can for a moment doubt that not a few of this vast concourse of people received into their hearts the engrafted word, whereby they shall be saved? Of the merits of these Discourses, nothing need be said; they will speak for themselves; and by their striking excellence, commend themselves to the sympathies of every reader, whose heart is by a living faith united to the Son of God. With much gratitude, the Publisher would acknowledge the kindness manifested by most of the Ministers, who generously aided the project by revising the reports of their Discourses, or by the use of their Manuscripts—thus showing their anxiety to perpetuate and extend by means of the Press, those benefits which they sought to confer by oral instruction. In this valuable auxiliary to the Pulpit, a series of excellent Discourses will be effectually preserved from oblivion, and handed down to coming generations as a Christian Memorial of the "GREAT EXHIBITION," 1851.

ALPHABETICAL LIST OF SUBJECTS.

NO.	SUBJECT.	TEXT	PREACHER.
1,738	Believer, the hope of the	Heb. vi. 19	Rev. W. Brock.
1,764	Canaan, the heavenly	Num. x. 29	T. Aveling.
1,713	Christ, on looking to	Isa. xlvi. 22	Dr. Hamilton.
1,756	— head of the church	Eph. i. 22	J. C. Harrison.
1,760	— life in	1 John v. 11	Dr. Archer.
1,773	— receiving sinners	Luke xv. 2	J. Weir.
1,781	— the receiver of sinners	Luke xv. 2	R. Hamilton.
1,768	Christian stedfastness	1 Cor. xv. 58	C. Stovel.
1,753-4	Christianity, the ultimate purpose of,	1 Cor. xv. 49	H. Allon.
1,706	City of Refuge	Heb. vi. 18	Dr. Beaumont.
1,714	Die? why will ye	Ezek. xviii. 31	J. Stoughton.
1,725	Difficulties of speculative inquiry	Psalm lxxiii. 16	J. H. Hinton.
1,770	Divine workmanship	Psalm xcii. 4	Dr. Beaumont.
1,772	Divine word, power of the	Heb. iv. 12	Dr. Cox.
1,700	Exhibition, the Great	Dan. v. 30	T. Binney.
1,739	Faith and prayer, the power of	Matt. xv. 28	W. Chalmers.
1,763	— justification by	Rom. v. 1	J. Stoughton.
1,771	— alone, justification by	Rom. iii. 28	T. E. Thoresby.
1,701	Gift of God, the	John iv. 10	B. W. Noel.
1,718	God, the testimonies of	Psalm cxix. 129	Dr. Archer.
1,727	— the goodness and love of	John iii. 16	B. W. Noel.
1,744	— the righteousness of	Rom. iii. 22	Dr. Beaumont.
1,752	— the heirs of	Rom. viii. 16, 17	T. Binney.
1,717	Gospel, the	Rom. i. 16	L. Tyerman.
1,743	Jesus, knocking at the door	Rev. iii. 20	Dr. Hamilton.
1,769	— the truth, as it is in	Eph. iv. 21	J. B. Brown.
1,786	— the loveliness of	Solomon's Song i. 3	J. H. Hinton.
1,728	Judgment, the final	Acts xvii. 29—21	J. Burnet.
1,787	— preparation for	Mal. iii. 2	W. Brock.
1,750	Life, the mystery of	Luke iv. 4	G. Smith.
1,765	Marriage feast, the	Matt. xxii. 1—14	B. W. Noel.
1,705	Prodigal's return, the	Luke xv. 24	W. Brock.
1,759	Redeemed from among all nations	Rev. vii. 9, 10	J. Weir.
1,724	Salvation	John vii. 37—39	G. Clayton.
1,778	—, the common	Jude iii.	W. Brock.
1,751	Serpent, the brazen	John iii. 14, 15	W. Chalmers.
1,785	Sin, genuine sorrow for	Zech. xii. 10	W. Chalmers.
1,777	Song of redemption, the	Rev. v. 9	J. Kennedy.
1,762	Spiritual conflict, the	John xii. 31	J. Aldis.
1,767	Theology—biographical	John v. 35	Dr. Hamilton.
1,735	Things temporal	2 Cor. iv. 18	S. Martin.
1,710	Truth, the	John xiv. 6	J. Aldis.
1,733	— witness to the	Luke xxiv. 48	C. Stovel.
1,711	Wisdom's Invitation	Prov. ix. 1—6	G. Smith.
1,720-1	Book for all nations, the		J. C. Miller.
1,741-2	Catholicity of the gospel		Dr. Dixon.
1,729	Desire of all nations		Dr. Cooke.
1,747-8	Great Gatherings		J. Stoughton.

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A Sermon,

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY EVENING, MAY 4, 1851,

BY THE REV. THOMAS BINNEY,

AT EXETER HALL.

"In that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain."—Daniel v. 30.

As this is the day of the commencement of these special services, I think it may not be improper, just in a few words, to explain their nature and object, and to give the reasons for the particular course of remark which I purpose pursuing to-night. These services are intended to be an expression of attention and respect from some religious and excellent men in this Metropolis towards the visitors from the different parts of our nation during the Exhibition. They do not appeal to the country for any pecuniary assistance: they take that all upon themselves; they do not go to the country for ministers to conduct the services, that is intended to be confined to the ministers of this Metropolis. The whole thing is a loving Christian act towards our friends from the country, that they may know that London has provided them with a central place of meeting for Christian worship and instruction; that they will not be intruders; that the place is theirs; that they have nothing to do but to come in, to occupy their seats and to feel themselves at home. You will understand by this, that the services are not intended for the people of London—for the members of our own churches—the attendants on our own congregations—they are supposed to be at their proper places, and that those places, instead of being incommodiously crowded, will thus be left in their usual state; our friends from the country are met by London Christian affection here and provided with a place for their own worship.

I wish you also to understand that though these services are occasioned by the Exhibition, and so far have a connexion with it, it is not to be supposed that the discourses that are delivered here are to bear upon that event. The more the services are made just similar to what the services are in our own places of worship, the more that the sermons are just plain simple declarations of gospel truth—appealing to the understanding and the conscience respecting the great things of God—the more that is done, the better, I apprehend, will the idea of the projectors be realized. The persons, therefore, who come to these services, although they come in connexion with the great event which brings them to London, come here to worship God, and to hear plain Scripture truth, and must not expect constant references to the Exhibition itself.

And yet I have thought, that on this, the opening day of these services, I should be in sympathy with your feeling if I referred to that event. I think it very likely that many have assembled here to-night under the influence of those feelings that have been so generally excited by the great sight which was the other day presented—a thing the like of which was never seen in the world before—the like of which in all its circumstances never can be repeated. I think it very likely that on this, the first day of these

services, and coming just upon the back of the opening of the Exhibition itself, I shall be in sympathy with your feeling, as I am certainly following the impulses of my own, if I request you to give me your attention, while I go through a short series of remarks suggested by that event.

I had previously determined otherwise. I had fixed upon a different text, and upon a different subject. I meant to have endeavoured to do just what I have been explaining should be done and will be done. But I was present at the sight and the pageant; I felt its impression and its influence; and, after I had done that, I thought that it might be appropriate to take something like what I have now lying before me—the portion of Scripture which I have read (*Daniel v.*) for our lesson this evening.

I mean, then, in the *first* place, to night, to go over the account that we have here of this great Babylonian feast. “Belshazzar, the king, made a great feast to a thousand of his lords, and drank wine before the thousand.” I wish, in a very few brief remarks, to go over this record, to bring out its principal points, and then I want to contrast with these points the particulars and features of the event, which at present has brought so many both of our own and other lands to this Metropolis.

1. “Belshazzar the king made a feast,” and the time when he did so was when his city was encompassed by a besieging army—it was a time of war—an army had been surrounding the city for some two years, and it was then that he made this festival. The occasion of it was very likely in honour of some of his idols—it partook something of the nature of an idolatrous festival, or was perhaps a kind of bravado—a sort of drunken debauch, by which he thought that he and his princes might show the feeling how little they cared for the danger and peril that might be supposed to be about them. The company, though numerous, was somewhat select—“He made a feast to a thousand of his lords”—it was confined to the aristocracy and distinguished. The king met with them, and, perhaps, with some of their attendants; “his wives and his concubines” were also there, and the proceedings of the festival were of a character with its beginning. It was a great festival—a feast of a thousand lords. The wine circulated freely, and there was intemperance and lust. As the wine began to take effect, and as the man became excited, he thought of something that would give zest to his pleasures. He thought that the sensuality would be the better for a little impiety and sacrilege. Under the influence of the wine, he, perhaps, felt that he could dare to do what he would not have done without it. It is a fearful thing that drink! I say that under the influence of this vicious excitement he thought of a new pleasure, and dared to do under that excitement what he would otherwise not have done; for, I think, he felt something of the sacredness of these vessels—the golden and silver vessels that were devoted to the service of Jehovah. Matters had passed before the observation of Belshazzar that could not have failed to impress his mind with the reality and personality of God, and, I doubt not, that he had within him a feeling—an inward consciousness of the character and government of Jehovah—but, under the influence of his debauch, he thought he could commit the act of profanity which he now projected.

You have heard of the parable, illustrative of the influence of strong drink: that the devil had a young man in his power, and offered him the choice of three sins: he was to decide whether he would murder his father, debauch his sister, or get drunk. He chose the latter as the least of the three; and when he was drunk he committed both the others! It is a parable, but it is a great illustration of what may be the result of this vicious influence.

“Belshazzar was drunk with wine, when he thought of the sacred vessels, and would

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have them brought. They were brought, "and the king, his wives, and his princes, and his concubines drank with them." And, further, as they were going on and desecrating these vessels, they, in a still more vociferous manner than before, praised the gods of gold and silver, of brass, of iron, and of wood, as if they had a proof before them now in the desecration of those vessels, dedicated to Jehovah of the superiority of their own idols.

So far things advanced well, as they thought; but, at that moment, the eye of the monarch was attacted by something on the wall. There came out the fingers of a man's hand, and he saw that hand moving, and writing upon the wall—writing something which he could not read—something which he did not understand. As the hand was seen moving and inscribing those mystic characters, the king's countenance was changed, and his thoughts troubled him so, that the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another—he was terrified—why? Belshazzar, why it may be a message from one of your gods of gold and silver! How dost thou know but that this is an answer from one of the gods whom thou hast been praising? It may be something expressive of his complacency in all that you have done! Why should the man be terrified by this handwriting upon the wall? Ah! he had an inward consciousness—he had knowledge enough, convictions enough, with respect to the character of God, to have an inward consciousness that this was something sent from no god of gold, or silver, or brass, or iron, or stone, or of wood; but something that predicted terror to himself. It was a fearful thing—that writing—to the tyrant! The hand that can move the pen, and inscribe, and write, especially when employed upon God's messages and divine thoughts, is a terrible thing to tyrants. The man was terrified; he was ready to give anything to have it explained! He called for his astrologers, and soothsayers, and all his wise men and magicians. He made them large promises, but all to no purpose! I cannot go over all the particulars of the history. You remember, then, the queen's mother, hearing of the excitement and terror of the company, came in and reminded the poor infatuated voluptuary that there was a man in his kingdom in whom was the spirit of the holy gods. So Daniel was sent for, and he came. Then the king promised him the scarlet robe, the chain of gold, and to be made the third ruler in the kingdom. The prophet stood forth, the grand type of moral power against physical; spiritual truth against brute force; the prophet of God, with God's message, against idolatry and the idolatrous. "Thy gifts be unto thee," he said, "and give thy rewards to another; yet I will read the writing on the wall, and I will tell thee the interpretation thereof." But, before he did so, he rose, as it were, up to the full stature of a king; and if there was anything kingly in the company, it was the prophet; the prophet of God reading such a lecture to the understanding and the conscience of the poor trembling monarch before him; as none but a prophet of God could do. So he went on, read the discourse, spoke to the king, appealed to his consciousness, his memory, his understanding respecting the facts that had passed in the life of Nebuchadnezzar, his father. How he had been lifted up with pride, and how God had taken a method to convince him that He alone ruled over the children of men, and how he came at last to acknowledge God's government and perfections. Then he added: "And thou, his son, O Belshazzar, hast not humbled thine heart, though thou knewest all this;" but, in thy debauch, hast brought out the golden and silver vessels that belonged to the temple of God, to desecrate here; and "thou hast praised the gods of gold, of silver, of brass, of iron, of wood and stone; and the God in whose hands thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, thou hast not glorified." Thus was this hand sent forth,

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and thus the writing made known. The writing was "MENE, MENE, TEKEL UPHARSIN." *Mene*—God hath numbered thy kingdom, and finished it. *Tekel*—thou art weighed in the balance and found wanting. *Upharsin*—division—thy kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians! And the king, even under this sentence—(the sentence, you will observe, is simply pronounced, to which there is added, no exhortation to repentance, to which the prophet adds nothing to give hope of the possibility of an arrest of judgment)—yet the king, under the influence of that does not forget his promise, but gives commandment that what he promised should be done. His promises were at first held cheap, and they were held cheap still by the prophet. No doubt it was rather a thing that was to be done, than that it really was done; for "in that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain."

Such is the record which has been lying before us.

II. Now, I wish with similar brevity and plainness next to notice the points of contrast between this and the great Banquet, for such we may call it, which has just been opened.

In the first place, what we are called to witness is not a Banquet for the senses—not a provision for the bodily appetites—nor a scene of revelry and intemperance. Why, there is no strong drink upon the premises—no intoxicating liquor to be dispensed or to be purchased. It is a Banquet for the eye and the intellect—for the reason; for the affections—for the heart; for the faculty of contemplation—for thought. What is set out there, what is spread abroad there, is to illustrate the works of God; to illustrate the world in which we live; to illustrate the faculties which God hath conferred upon us; to illustrate what man hath been enabled to do in the exercise of those faculties. It is a great feast for the reason, for the heart, for man to go and meditate, and find that he hath within him an appetite of moral, spiritual, intellectual desire, that can hunger and thirst, and be gratified by what it finds there.

Again: it is not a Banquet made and provided merely for the noble, Belshazzar the king made a feast to a "thousand of his lords," but that which we witnessed is not confined to the noble and aristocratic, dignified by title and rank. Why, it is furnished by art and handicraft. The things are brought forth and produced by the masses of the people, their labour is honoured and dignified; and while the highest in rank go there and read lessons, and find voices addressing them, to which they will do well to listen, it is open to the multitude. Workmen—those who labour with the hand—are to be welcomed there, and the time is coming when masses of them will be there, moving about with intelligence, making their observations and participating in the gratification. Every man, woman and child above the condition of pauperism may partake of that feast, and sit down at that Banquet.

Again: it is not idolatrous or profane. It is not the idolatry of the intellect, or genius, or art, or industry, though some people may call it so. In connexion with it there is to be no praise and laudation of the gods of silver and of gold, of iron and brass, of wood and of stone. There are many objects indeed in it that might pass for gods—and would have passed and been taking for gods once, by nations, too, illustrious for their civilization and their literature, but they will not do so with us. We can look at them for what they are, merely as illustrating what there is in man, aye, and as illustrating what God has given to man; but they are nothing else.

But it is not only not idolatrous—the edifice was not built, the pageant was not done in honour of any idol—but the living and true God was not forgotten. The illustrious individual who projected and has done so much to realize the great idea, has very frequently expressed himself in a very becoming and admirable manner, referring frequently to God; and to the manner in which His beneficence might be illustrated, and in which His gifts, to different portions of the earth might be set forth, and in what he has done for man and given to man, might thus be made known. For one, I thank God that the opening of the Exhibition was accompanied by a religious service.

Oh! brethren, it was a great and affecting sight to see that large mass of people—some 20,000 or 30,000 people—persons of different ranks, and of different nations, all still—still under a sense of reverence—with the calm, deep feeling pervading the whole mass, while the highest religious functionary of the nation was addressing himself to God by prayer; acknowledging God in his gifts; referring everything to God; giving praise to God for what was enjoyed, and supplicating the Divine blessing upon all that was doing and all that was projecting. Why, the very *Catalogue*—the book that every-

individual has to take into his hands, bears upon its front, upon its cover, and upon its title—a text from the *Holy Scriptures*. God's word is honoured on the book as God is honoured in the building:—"The earth is the Lord's, and all that therein is: the compass of the world and they that dwell therein." Here is thus a text and a Divine saying upon the catalogue of the Exhibition, reminding every one that shall take it into his hands of the religiousness of the feeling by which all should be contemplated.

Again: it is not a thing connected with war: it does not take place like this feast before us, in a time of war, it is not even connected with war; it is not even the pomp and pageantry of a review; it is not a war in picture and shadow; war at play in idleness; it is not that. It takes place in this kingdom after a long period of peace. It would not have taken place without it. You owe it to our long peace, among other things. Every mind that has been connected with it has associated with it the idea that it may promote peace. It was a great thing on Thursday last to witness the representatives of twenty-six foreign nations or states; at least twenty-six foreign nations or states represented in the persons of the Commissioners,—all these uniting with Englishmen, our own Commissioners, and these all forming *one body, one mind*; the Englishmen, and the different foreigners representing so many different states and kingdoms, all uniting together, aided by the Consort of our Sovereign; and then he, as the mouth-piece of them all, reading the address—an address which you will find closes not only with a devout acknowledgment of God, but with a particular and emphatic expression of the hope that such an event as the Exhibition is, will greatly promote the peace of the world, and bring nations together in harmony and in brotherhood; and then to hear the Sovereign in her address respond to this, echoing the hope and expressing the desire of the permanence and universality of the peace to which they had referred. Why it is the most natural thing in the world that such should be the result: to see the representatives of different nations standing thus in the same building, on the same floor, united together in the same act, taking a part in the utterances of these sentiments, coming to a feast like this. Why, it is like families visiting together—families that are on the terms of coming into one another's houses; who exchange visits; who receive invitations and give them back again. Why, people who get to be on terms like that, you cannot expect to fall into hostile animosities! It promotes a good feeling; and preserves it.

There were many little things that to me—I hope you will excuse my making these personal allusions—but there were many little things on Thursday that to me were very affecting and very suggestive. Now in the hour that was passing previous to the appearance of the Sovereign, there was a little child I observed—a little boy some five or six years old, came running out from I suppose, his mother's side, and got upon the steps of the platform on which the throne was placed; looked about with pleasure and a sense of perfect security; walked up the steps and ran back again to the maternal knee; why the child could not have done that in a field of battle! A child could not have done that at the Colosseum at Rome, when there was a great gathering of the people there to see men fight with each other, or fight with wild beasts! He could not have done that at a review, the mimicry of war. He could not have run into the very centre and looked about with perfect security. And he was secure! There was poetry about the whole thing, and far more than poetry—something that went down to the depth of one's heart, and awakened thoughts and reflections that occasioned tears!

Well there was another thing. Now, observe my only excuse for this line of remark is what I have already referred to; it is not at all what I intended when I first thought of engaging in this service; but, as this is the first Sunday after the occurrence, and our just coming here after having witnessed the great spectacle, I am sure you will excuse, and I hope be in sympathy with me. But there was another sight that was to me still more suggestive; I hope it will not be considered with the solemnity of this service and the seriousness of this occasion, if I mention inconsistent names. I saw for a long time in a very earnest and very familiar conversation, Mr. Cobden and the Duke of Wellington! There was the monument of a past age—there was the type of a time which we hope is gone by—there was the image of old war; and, perhaps, to whom we were much indebted for the very spectacle itself, there was the man who, by striking that great and decisive stroke, laid the foundation of that long peace out of which has arisen the very event which we are now celebrating; there he stood the image of a past age, and there was in earnest conversation with him apparently in the most friendly

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tones, the herald of peace!—the proclaimers of that which is to reduce the expense of war—the type of a coming time—the representative, not of the antagonism, but of the industry and intercourse of the nations! Why, a man could not have a heart in him, nor a head upon his shoulders, if he could look upon such a sight as that without drawing from it some reflections that both warmed his heart and bettered his understanding.

Ah! and then to mention nothing more, there was the Sovereign and her Consort coming in that procession, leading each a little child! The Queen and the Prince coming into that great assembly, that some people have thought of with such terror—that they talked about with such apprehension—and even, it would seem, people that ought to have been wiser, at one time rather dreaded. There they were, coming into that assembly each of them leading a little child! They felt that little children could be there! They felt they were safe, their lives safe, their minds safe—that there was nothing there to terrify or endanger. And then the walking all round about, the sovereign feeling as if she was just one with the whole people, and every one feeling that she was a being to be loved! and they did love. Why, there was all this that was indicative of the manner in which this great event may unite together the different classes of society in the nation, and the different nations of the world, and thus be, under God, one of the great means of promoting “peace on earth and good will towards men.”

And in the last place, the thing advanced and terminated, just in a manner consistent with all these points of contrast. There was not a single circumstance of evil omen, there was not the slightest accident to produce a panic or apprehension—there was not a single shadow upon the scene! Nobody felt alarmed. There was nothing to produce agitation. The very sun in the heavens was shining down and smiling upon us, as though He that sits upon the heavens approved the scene! No mysterious hand came forth to write its “*Mene mene tekel upharsin.*” No prophet stood up to confront and reprove the Sovereign and utter his denunciations against a voluptuous court and people, but the man of God had besought the divine blessing, and the hearts of the people had united in the prayer, and instead of being confounded by the reproof of the prophet, the Sovereign retired from the scene, we trust, having received a blessing from those united prayers; and all felt that everything was calculated to excite, and did excite, gratitude to the Giver of all Good, by whom “kings reign and princes decree justice,” and in whom “we live and move and have our being.”

Now, brethren, permit me to conclude this address by two or three remarks arising out of it. I will just give a suggestive text of Scripture for each of the remarks. I cannot expatiate on them at this time. In the first place, “Say not that the former times were better than these! for thou dost not inquire wisely concerning this.” (Eccles. vii. 10.) Now if that caution was necessary in the time of Solomon, still more appropriate is it now. There are some people who are always looking back—to whom

“Distance lends enchantment to the view.”

They are always looking to the scene presented by some part of the path through which society *has* passed. They think and speak about certain “good old times.” Now it is well for us to remember that ours are the real old times; the world is older to day than it was yesterday—it will be older to-morrow than it is to-day! The “old times” were the young times—the “old times” were the times of the world’s youth and the world’s childhood, and a very silly and foolish childhood and youth it had. What part of the former times would you prefer to have lived in to these? Would you like to have lived in Egypt when they were building the pyramids? Would you like to have lived in Babylon under Belshazzar? Would you like to have lived among the Greeks and Romans? Would you like to have lived in the Middle Ages? Would you like to have lived in the time of the Crusades? Would you like to have lived in the time of the Wars of the Roses? Would you like to have lived in the times of the Charles’s? Would you like to have lived in the last century even? Where will you find the times that have anything in them to compare to ours? Take physical comfort; take correspondence—take facility of intercourse and means of rapid communication; take education, bad as we are, much as we have to lament, oppressed as may be many of the people, much as poverty and ignorance may exist; when was there anything like the amount of information, knowledge, literature, comforts, conveniences, multiplied to vast classes and masses of the people? The cheapness of the Bible! Think of that—the price of Bibles! The *New Testament* for fourpence, and the whole

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book of God brought down so that it can be taken into the hand of every child in the kingdom! The religious excitement, the religious thought, misdirected as a great deal of it is in the present day, yet still it is a sign of life. Why the last century was dead—dormant, except so far as there was the excitement of the Reformation by Wesley and Whitfield; but in literature, in philosophy, spread over almost all religion, except that line of excitement, there was a dead coolness—scepticism—everything that was worse than what exists in the present day. I say, therefore, (which I might illustrate very largely) when you see what is passing before your eyes in the great event that is distinguishing the present year and the present era, “Say not that the former days were better than these? for thou dost not inquire wisely concerning this.”

2. Again, brethren, we have been speaking about this feast of Belshazzar, and we have been speaking about the different sort of banquet which there is in the Exhibition. There is another feast brethren! Brother sinners there is another feast! “Behold I make in Zion a feast of fat things; a feast of fat things full of marrow; a feast of wine on the lees well refined,” Highly figurative language this—the figurative language of ancient prophesy, but it was pointing to that great fact—the greatest event in the history of the world, when God set forth his Son as a propitiation for sin—when he should come “manifest in the flesh,” who should say of himself, and say to us all:—“Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink of his blood, ye have no life in you.” “My flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed.” “Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness and are dead, my father giveth you the bread from heaven.”

Oh, brethren, there have been greater things on earth than this Great Exhibition—greater sights than that! I was speaking to my people this morning, of a great sight which all the people gathered together to see. That sight!—The sufferings of Christ! The sufferings of Christ—the glory that was to follow, that into which angels desire to look, from which the highest intelligences gather lessons respecting God which they can gather from nothing else. God has set forth his power and wisdom by the works of his hands, but to “principalities and powers in heavenly places he hath made known by the church the manifold wisdom of God.” “He that drinketh of this water shall thirst again, but he that drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst, and the water that I shall give him shall be to him a well of water springing up unto everlasting life.” “Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.” Let us then come to the Scriptures—let us come to the Gospels and Epistles—let us come and sit down at the feet of the Great Teacher, and let us seek to be led by the Spirit into the mysteries of truth, that we may enter into the holy place by a belief in him who hath sanctified the way through his own precious blood, that we may at last be permitted to sit down at that feast which is provided for them that hereafter shall be admitted to the upper world, and the “Marriage Supper of the Lamb.”

3. Again, “To him shall the gathering of the people be.” (Gen. xl ix. 10.) We are all feeling and thinking about the visits of the many nations to our land. May God grant that many among them may get good, and may receive some knowledge, and carry away with them some lessons by their visits to this land of light and truth. But “to him shall the gathering of the nations be” a prophecy of the Messiah—of all people learning of him, being taught of him, receiving his law, imbibing his spirit and becoming brothers—brothers in a far higher sense than what many people mean when they talk of “brotherhood.”

Now, brethren, for this Christians ought to live; for this they ought to pray; and for this they ought to use every influence; for this they ought to plead by the daily eloquent discourse of a holy and consistent life! Christianity, whether it be true or false, is the greatest fact in the history of the world. It cannot be denied, that it is a far greater wonder if it be false than if it is true. I can account for Christianity if it is true; I think I can understand its origin; I can understand its might, its majesty, and influence; I can understand how it spread among the nations; how it emptied the temples, how it demolished the gods; how it changed literature; how it gave a different direction to art; how it has operated upon all men, at least upon those portions of our race most distinguished for knowledge, wisdom and power. I can understand it if it is a divine thing, how it came to be at all, how it came to be the great fact that it is. If it be FALSE, it is a far greater mystery, and I should like to see the man that can solve it.

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Talk about Christianity having done so little—the *Bible*, if it be the book of God, having done as you say little. Why, to the man that makes that objection, I say your Bible has been spreading its pages before all the world far longer, and it has done far less. If there be no Bible but the Bible of nature, and if God has written his truth upon the sky—if that be God's revelation, and if this is not God's revelation, then you may talk about the little this book has done if you please; but I tell you, that which you call God's true revelation has done far less, for nobody ever read that. All idolatries, mind, are a false reading of that. Wherever you find irreligion, a false religion, the religion of idolatry, priests and sacrifices, you will find the great mass of the people cannot understand and cannot read this "only true Bible," which has been so long spread before them. Let us then hold to the truth, and believe that, in spite of the long time in which men have been allowed to corrupt and depart from it, and do so little to spread it, it hath a power; and though it may appear that Christianity has done so little, it is the most powerful thing in the world at this moment. Power, why Christianity is the most powerful thing in the world at this moment! The very errors of a great many of your Christians have far more power than the truths that are held by those that deny it. Aye, it is the very power of God and of God's truth, and if the church were true to its responsibilities, and true to its duties, and if you that profess to call yourselves Christians, would only lead Christian lives; if you would only put on the Lord Jesus Christ and do all for the world you could, and live especially according to the gospel and in harmony with it, "the kingdoms of the world" would far sooner become the "kingdoms of God and of his Christ!"

4. Now, in the last place, brethren, "when the Son of man shall come in his glory, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory, and before him shall be gathered all the nations, and he shall separate them one from the other, as the shepherd divideth the sheep from the goats." There is to be another gathering of the nations. "The hour cometh, when they that are in their graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and shall come forth; they that have done good to the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil to the resurrection of damnation." And at that gathering of the nations we must all be present; for "every eye shall see him," and every one must give an account to God. *Mene mene tekel upharsin*—the doom of the sinner, number, weight, division—death, judgment, hell. "Thy days are numbered;" life hath come to an end; "thou art weighed in the balance and found wanting." Cut him asunder; divide him, let him go to his own place without, for know ye that the unrighteous cannot inherit the kingdom of God. Oh! brethren, let us see it, that we have the experience of St. Paul—"What things were gain to me those I counted lost for Christ. Yea, doubtless, I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ. And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith. I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." And thus living, we may be able to say with the same apostle, "Our conversation is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able, even to subdue all things unto himself." And then for the upper world—the New Jerusalem, for that is the city of which it is said, where is the river of the water of life, clear as crystal. The lamb is the light of it, and the nations that are saved shall walk in that light!

May you and I through the faith of Christ and the mercy of God in him be made meet for that inheritance, that we may thus be gathered at last with all the redeemed into that blessed world, and sit down at the great feast which will be the "Marriage Supper of the Lamb."

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THE PRODIGAL'S RETURN.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY EVENING, MAY 11, 1851,

BY THE REV. W. BROCK,

AT EXETER HALL.

"For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost and is found."—Luke xv. 24.

THE teaching of our Saviour, my brethren, must be taken as a whole. Just as we act with regard to other teachers, so must we act towards the Great Teacher sent from God: our business is not with what he has declared at one time only, our business clearly is with what he has declared generally and at large. If so be we adopt any other plan than that of thus examining the doctrines of Christ by a comprehensive view of what he has said and done, we shall certainly be in the wrong, and wrong from first to last—wrong, not only, in all probability, without misunderstanding any particular portion of his teaching which refers to ourselves, of itself, but we shall certainly be liable to misunderstand, misapply, and misinterpret his general teaching, and that which we have selected, instead of being a practical and profitable truth for us, may become by our separating it from the other teaching of Christ and consequent perversion of it, to all intents and purposes, seriously, a practical error. And I make this remark now, in order to guard you against a most serious perversion of the parable which I have just read. The parable of the prodigal son has been most plausibly and even efficaciously used against what may be called the great evangelical doctrine of reconciliation with God through the mediation of Christ. Men have said, "why do you insist upon the necessity of a mediation? Look at the parable of the prodigal son and you will see that no such necessity exist for this complex method. The man came at once to the bosom of his father, his father received him, and there was no need of any mediation—of any substitute or of any sacrifice whatever. That man came hungry to his father, and his father on account of his penitence received him. And this is the way of the sinners return and reception with his heavenly Father; there is no occasion for the precious blood of which you speak (and I use the very words which have been used in this matter) there is no mention made of the intervention through the medium of the precious blood, and why should you adopt this cumbersome and absurd doctrine when the way is so clearly and simply defined by the parable to be by a returning in repentance direct to the Father?" "Had anything more been necessary," men have said, Jesus Christ would have indicated it in that parable. Many there are who formed their argument, if we may call it an argument on this parable in this way, instead of drawing sound doctrine from a general view of the principal teachings of our Saviour.

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Now, my brethren, it cannot be doubted, but that it is clearly the part of an honest inquirer, not simply to take that teaching of his from any isolated passages, far less from one parable only, but to endeavour by candid inquiry to arrive at a general result of the teachings of all that He said, and of all the parables. It is the duty of every honest inquirer to take not only what our Saviour said here, but to read that which our Saviour has said elsewhere, and when he has done this, I will say in all deference, then he will find that what has been asserted is utterly false, and cannot be maintained. I need only instance one passage which sets the difficulty altogether aside. In the fourteenth chapter of the Gospel according to St. John and the sixth verse it is written, "Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."

Now that is the integral part of our Lord's doctrine: it is not given to us in a parable—nothing could be more explicit; nothing more forcible, nothing more distinct and conclusive on this subject. If therefore you would be acquainted, or rather if you would get at the real truth as our Lord propounded it, you must take, not the parable of the prodigal son exclusively, but you must take that parable along with other parts of our Lord's teaching, and then you will find that the sinner can return only through Christ. There will be no more doubt about that, than there would if I were to tell you, that, to get out of this room you must pass through that doorway—so the sinner comes at his God only and exclusively through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

If it be asked why through Jesus Christ? I must content myself with the answer which I take to be the philosophy of the whole case: Jesus Christ has said so, and if you take him to be the teacher, why then you must take what has been said on the authority of the teacher: "No man cometh unto the Father but by me." It is not then a dogma of the schoolmen, it is not simply the teaching of a catechism, it is not some closing paragraph in the despised *Athenasian Creed*, it is the simple, and I may say, the sublime utterance of him who cannot lie—"I am the way, the truth and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by me."

And the same remarks will apply to the great subject of regeneration. People ask why the necessity of persisting in the doctrine that man must be born again? Look at the prodigal; he came to himself, just as a lost sinner cometh to himself. No Divine operation comes into play. For an explanation I would say, follow the same course I have been recommending before. Refer to the other teachings of our Lord. Refer to what our Lord said to Nicodemus, "Verily, I say unto you, except a man be born again, he cannot enter the kingdom of God."

Now brethren, let these introductory remarks be borne in mind throughout, and speaking as I am about to speak, of the sinner as he comes back from his wandering, and asks, as he never asks in vain, that he may obtain the pardon of his sins, and thereby eternal life, what I have already said will be found to apply materially to the great subject which we have to consider to-night.

In the first place, we remark this parable of the prodigal son, clearly represents the alienation of the sinner from God—the alienation of the sinner from God. Let me say to you what the man did. We are told that after a few days, having asked his father to divide with him his substance, and give to him that which belonged to him, we are told, that taking it all, he went away into a far country. Now I ask every man here if that alienation was not voluntary? Who compelled this younger son to leave his father's house? Who forced him as against his will to go away? Who did cruelly and solely constrain him to bid adieu to his patrimonial habitation, and to turn his back upon the home of his childhood and of his youth? I put it to you—did he not go away entirely of his own accord? and was it not of his own accord that he afterwards stayed away? So it is with each and every man that is an alien from his God! Be it known that no man is compelled to transgress the law of God—that no man is under the absolute necessity of working out his condemnation—that every man goes away from God of his own accord. I should like you to bear that in mind, not only now, but in time to come.

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I know that many will question this. Some of you will be ready to say, I cannot help it. But come now and "let us reason together." If you say you are compelled to sin; who compels you? If you say your companions, very likely you chose them yourself. Somehow they are placed in your path. But there is a power that will assist you in breaking away from that companionship to-morrow. Be it known unto you that there is a power that will break yourselves of them if that power be appealed to, and if the Lord, in whom that power rests inherently, should be your refuge and your strength. He will say unto your companions as Christ said at the grave of Lazarus—"Loose him, and let him go." Although you may have to contend with the world, the flesh, and the devil, and these may have been tyranizing over you, you can by making God your strength break away from them all.

Yes, and there is another answer to my interrogation which, although you do not say it in words you do in feeling, and in thought perhaps, and so I dare to say it for you nevertheless, and that is, that God compels you to sin. I should like every man who feels it should say it out, and though it is not *said*, as few men there are who would not be alarmed at such an admission, when expressed in these words; but now I say it for you, as I know there are many of you who attribute to your organization and the circumstances in which God has placed you, your habits of sin. Then I ask you again to come to the Sacred Scriptures for knowledge on this vitally important subject. Has not God said, "I have no pleasure in the death of a sinner, but rather that he should turn from his wickedness and live," and then how can he be the occasion of our alienation? when as he says, "I sent my only begotten Son into the world, that whosoever believed in him should have everlasting life."

And so God does not, in his marvellous loving-kindness, restrain you, but your own conscience I believe convinces you that God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man; and the prodigal son going away and keeping away of his own accord, is an exact representation of the sinner as he keeps away from God, and acts of his own accord, and of his own accord he remains away. This first point is, I think, fully illustrated by the statement that the prodigal made this request to his father.

We are told that he gathered it altogether and he went his way into a far country. His feeling evidently was, the further the better, that he might be free from all parental restraints, and free from all that could possibly be a hinderance to his own sinful practices; and when there, he spends his substance in riotous living; neither fearing God nor the sons of men. All the scenes of his boyhood obliterated from his memory. There was he bent upon living to himself and to the gratification of his grossest propensities. This then is an exact representation of the unconvinced, unconverted sinner. Why, I speak to multitudes of you to-night, my brethren, who have no sort of compunction because of your alienation from God. Some of you would, if you could, immerse yourselves in all the pleasures that this great metropolis could supply. There are many of you who would have no hesitation, or anything like reluctance, ere this night has passed, if you could possess the means, you would surround yourselves with all the appliances of sin, and of consequent alienation from God! There are also many men who are well to do in the world, who are regarded as moral men, and are actually admired and respected in their neighbourhood who are ungodly withal!

Now, men and brethren, remember I do not say that you are intemperate and licentious, but do not your own consciences say that a vast multitude of you are ungodly in their characters? You would not in word deny God, but you fear to recognize him—you practically forget God! I do not bear false witness then, against my neighbour, when I say that this is the great cardinal sin—this individual forgetfulness of God! The prodigal son going away into a far country, away from all the influences of his father's house, is a just representation of unconverted sinners. Here they have been carrying on practices totally at variance with the teachings of the Word of God and of the Holy Ghost. Their hearts feel sad within them, and well they may whilst they continue to live worldly lives in direct opposition to the teachings of truth and the laws

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of that God in whose hands their lives are, and whose are all their ways. They have not glorified him—it is a voluntary alienation, and the necessary punishment is the result at the same time.

And again, look at the scene of the alienation of the sinner as it is represented there. See how miserable it is! With what compunctions was it visited? With what remorse did he bring before his mind the recollections of his father's house? And see how bad leads to worse—how when a man gets wrong, how he goes on getting more and more wrong. He first began with repugnance to his father, and went on until by and by the application came to receive his portion of goods, that he might depart from his father's house, and he thus went on from one step to another in crime and debauchery, until he had spent all that he had, and we are told there was a great famine in the land, a consummation to complete his ruin. Now where was his vaunted independence? Why the man was likely to become the victim of starvation, and he was glad to become a swineherd. That then was the lowest point of his degradation—he was sent into the fields to keep swine, and even then he would fain have filled his belly with the husks which the swine were eating, but could not get at them. The man who had been faring sumptuously every day; the man who had enough and to spare; the man who had left, according to the description there, a comfortable home which abounded in all the luxuries and appliances of wealth, and then who would have been glad to have become the companion of swine, and was not able even to obtain the pittance of their food. Was there ever anything comparable to that? Yes, there is something comparable to it. Perhaps some body may already have experienced something of the comparison. The prodigal was not the first man who found that sin must be paid for. I mean who had found out what peradventure you may have found out, that if you drink of the cup of pleasure, you must have the poison as well as the pleasure. The poison is not merely found at the bottom, but it is diffused throughout the whole. The man who will have the pleasures of sin, will find that the "wages of sin is death"—a death in agony of body, and oftentimes in the bitterer agony of the mind, and yet beyond that a death of the soul, awful indeed to contemplate. Do I not speak to-night to some who know from experience that sin is disappointing, woefully, bitterly disappointing! Has it not happened to some of you, to feel that you would give the world to be right when you have felt in your heart that you have been wrong? Are there not many among you who cannot bear to look forward to the article of death? If you begin to talk about dying, some man says, "I won't listen to you. If it comes to that you are going to moralize about the dissolution of the body or the day of judgment, I shall just abstract my attention." How many there are who can say, "that is just my case—I do not dare to think about it." What! actually afraid to think about your own course? If that be the case you must be doing that now, which you cannot, you openly confess, calmly, tranquilly, and with satisfaction reflect upon! I do not want anything more to convince me of the sinfulness of your condition than your being afraid to think about that condition. If my eye were to light upon you, I should see it probably swimming with that which you call gratification; but I should say a dozen words to you, and instead of beaming with satisfaction, it would soon become dim with mortification and remorse, and you would ask me not to torment you "before the time!"

It is a merciful thing that man cannot turn from God without pain! If a man departs from the light that he is possessed of, he must suffer as a consequence. And this is man's alienation from God; it is voluntary, it is resolute, and your consciences bear me out in this: it is miserable to see what is true and not to do it! You know more about it than you would like to tell. You know that there are sleepless nights; that there are mornings that on looking back upon the history of the night, conscience does its work with fearless power!

Secondly, Let me speak to you of the sinner's conversion to God. I say the sinners conversion to God. And see how beautifully and with what graphic power that is brought out in a few words. We are told "that he came to

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himself." How often, when we see a man half insane—a species of infatuation—of delusion—of insanity—we say "the man is not himself," and by and by we have to say, occasionally it turns out, that the man is "himself" again. Now that just describes the regeneration—that phrase describes to the very life the case of the man who is born again by the power of the Holy Ghost. And so it is said of the prodigal, (and the Lord teaches the same in many other places) that he came to himself again.

And now mark the power of regeneration on his mind: the first thing is the discovery of his need. That is the first thing in a case of conversion, whether it be in India or in London; whether with you who are strangers from the provinces, or those who are here from the usual places of worship of this metropolis. The first thing is a sense of the absolute need of mercy which God only can supply. And see how this is brought out here: the man feels there is no good in going to his former companions. They would not know him now. As long as he had wherewithal to gratify their bodily passions and appetites, so long they would recognize him as their companion, but when he became a poor man and a swineherd, it would have been in vain to have appealed to them now. He therefore says, in what seems to me a sublime soliloquy, "How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!"—in such a condition that a little more and I am clean gone—I perish with hunger! I do think there is something about that which no man can misunderstand: that expression of the man's necessity—I perish with hunger. Just look at the signification of that word. The power of the Holy Ghost has begun the work of regeneration; and it is indicated by the expression of repentance:—"I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee." And, my brethren, if the spirit of love to God be at work upon your hearts to-night, depend upon it you will say just the same. We first spoke to you of the necessity to your being saved, the conviction that you are absolutely lost. You cannot take the first step even, till you have been, the multitude of you, taught that you are satisfied that you are at present on the verge of hell. The man who comes to himself conceives that he is hungry; that is the first thing; and the second thing is the comprehension of the source of the blessing, where he will be enabled to find relief from his afflictions. He had had enough of his companions, and he could not think of looking to them, even if they had been within his reach; and it was probable that many of them were in a similar condition to himself. It was his father now! His father's servant even—gradation among his father's servants, and even the very daily bread of which his father's servants had to partake, and his feeling was just this: oh, if I could but be a door-keeper in that old house at home! How preferable to the condition which I have been in here! If I can but become a door-keeper in my father's house!

Now hearken to his soliloquy. How many of my father's hired servants have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father. There may be some fear about his having me, but whatever may be the fear, I will try at all events. No solid comfort for me except in my father's house, and my father's love! And that is the sinner all over, when he is convinced of his sins. He wants to get back to God. It is from God that he has broken off by his transgressions and his iniquity. It is that pardoning mercy—certain mercy—which in his case God only can supply, he seeks to realize. One indication of his being penitent is this: I have destroyed myself, but in God is perfect life found. And not simply in the sense of one passage, but we have multitudes of passages describing this condition. "You have sought to obtain a supply whence a supply cannot be obtained." Again: "My people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water." Again: "For they have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind."—"They cry peace, peace, when there is no peace."

The next point of similarity is this practical determination to go and get that blessing: he says, I will arise and go to my father. I will not remain

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where I am, for if I be so far gone as to be beyond all redemption, I will go back and tell him all ! I will speak of my transgressions, not only against him, but likewise against my God. I will not ask for sonship, I will go and ask for servitude. I will say to him, make me as one of thy hired servants—anything to be within the compass of his eye—anything to be within the reach of his voice. I will venerate and love him more than ever—beyond utterance ; if I can be but his hired servant ; happy, thrice happy—joyful shall I be !

Well, he sets about his return ; but there is no gilded carriage awaiting him now ! There is no gay obsequious retinue accompanying him now ! There is no boisterous mirth possessing his sympathy now. He has to go afoot, and he has to go alone, and in his penury. I think I see him, wrapping around him his tattered garments. There he is bringing to his mind recollections of the scene of his childhood and youth, and thinking of his father's house. Cannot you see him ! There, perhaps, as he is getting up within sight of the outer boundary of the patrimonial domain, there rises on his eye remains of the doings of his childhood and his youth. On that side is a hill, up which he has oftentimes climbed with childhood's happy glee ; and there is the woodland and the stream, in which and about which he has delighted to play with his artless companions. All these happy recollections fill his soul ; and having got thus far, will he go further ; yes he will—"I will arise and go to my father." It is just thus with the penitent sinner ; nothing will do for that man but God. One man offers ordinances, but the poor sinner rejoins, I do not want sacrament, I want salvation ! Another man is ready to give him philosophy, and endeavours to get his impressions of religion founded on this basis, but the man says, I do not want your philosophy nor your analysis, I want forgiveness. So by obstructors who think that a man can find any other access. They are all left until the man has got back to God. He would not have the husks, he would not have anything, the various deceptive appetites and tastes are all of that character, and they are all forsaken, because there is a sense of the blessing of God, and a practical resolution that for that blessing he will apply.

Men and brethren, are you in this condition ? Do you, (and I speak to those who recognize that they are sinners,) do you feel determined thus to turn your footsteps to the patrimonial dwelling ? If you do, you can follow me in the consideration of the next part of this vitally important subject. In the next place, we have to consider acceptance with God. Now look at the man getting within sight of his father's house. He thinks on this subject intensely : there is hope, but there is some measure of fear. There is expectation, but there is some measure of doubt withal. He feels that his great error was in having gone away ; but there is an air of tranquillity coming over him. The man feels to be breathing a different atmosphere from that which he has been breathing, for that was foul indeed ; but all about him now brings forcibly to his recollection those past periods of happiness which he had once enjoyed and deeply wrought in him a conviction of his fall and of his sin ! And there he is musing and musing until he seems almost about to stand still, when though he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, ran to meet him, had compassion on him, and fell upon his neck and kissed him. That is the acceptance he met with ; and, I observe in the first place, it was immediate—it was immediate acceptance. The father was waiting for his return, and often had the old man's bowels yearned over the poor wanderer. He hoped that some day or other he might come back again, and there he was. He had been dead and was alive again ; he had been lost and was found. He had been very wicked, but he was now penitent. He was the very image of the most abject degradation it is possible to imagine. There were certain appropriate remarks which he made which ought not to be overlooked. He felt ere he could be accepted he needed forgiveness for his sin and degradation. He said, "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight and am no more worthy to be accounted thy son ;" but his father clasped him in his arms, as if to make him feel that it was right now. Well, as you see him there clasping that returned wanderer, that, (with reverence be it spoken) is an image of the way in which God will

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receive you. That is how God will receive the broken-hearted sinner, and if that is not enough to break a sinner's heart, I do not know what is. That he against whom you have rebelled ; that he whose wrath you have dared ; and he against whom you have lifted up your puny arm of your rebellion, should thus receive you, and yet that is the way he will receive you immediately you come back to him through Jesus Christ. It was immediate!

Then, moreover, I remark it was free. The man had his confession all ready ; not as a confession of the lip, nor as just an utterance that his memory would have prompted him to at the moment. He had his confession all ready, as a loving and grateful acknowledgment of his heart, and he began to pour it out : "Father, I have sinned against heaven and thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son." But his father stopped him ; his return was proof enough of his penitence. So with every object of God's mercy. Their very abject position is a plea for his mercy, and they are receptive of it as soon as they apply. But he will not compel them. It must be by their own free choice. And if I speak to penitent transgressors to-night, let me put them on their guard lest you be led away with the idea that you must "prepare yourselves." What preparation does the text refer to that the prodigal underwent? What preparation can man make that he may claim the acceptance of God? God accepts man as he is. Do not let anybody misguide you ; do not let anybody mislead you. All the fitness he requires is, for you to feel your need of him ; and just as freely as the prodigal was accepted, so will you be received on your return to God. You bring nothing ; he needs nothing ; you have nothing ; he asks nothing. Wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption, are all free gifts of God. He asked for servitude, he obtained sonship. He was not simply welcomed, but that over, received as he was in his father's arms, he was ushered into his father's house, and re-assured of his cordial reception by the reiterated pledge of his father's gifts. He was quite certain now! And his father said to his servants, bring forth the best robe and put it on him ; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet, take away those tattered garments. Bring forth the best robe that it may not be known that the man has ever been anything but my son from first to last. Put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet, and bring hither the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and be merry. And as he stood and heard it all—his father's exultation ; witnessing the expressions of his father's generosity, the poor, voluntary, miserable exile, sat at his father's right hand, and the whole household was merry on his account. That is what I call full salvation ! A full salvation that awaits the return of every sinner that is penitent! You shall have life—you shall have life more abundantly. He will receive you graciously, and love you freely! To you sinners that are penitent, his grace shall abound. You shall not be simply snatched from perdition, you shall have your title clear for eternal life. To you who may be to this very hour on the high road to perdition, I would say, believe in Christ and return to God through Christ, and you shall be at this very hour converted, and have conferred upon you the dignity and title of the son of God! "His ways are not our ways ; his thoughts are not our thoughts." It is not forgiveness and nothing more, it is the reality of acceptance, of complete reconciliation with him ; a becoming as it were members of his body, of his flesh. It is immediate free and full, and let me add irrevocable—his acceptance is irrevocable!

There was a sulky selfish elder brother in the field, who, not understanding at first what was going on, or rather not professing to understand, when he heard that which had come to pass, we are told he was angry, and would not go in ; and not only so, but he proceeded forthwith to try and alienate the old man's love from his younger son, and he took a most plausible method of doing it, and he said to his father—"Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment ; and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends : but as soon as this thy son was come, who hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf." But the old man would not be alienated ! He said—"Son, thou art ever with me and all that I have is thine. It is meet that we should make

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merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; was lost, and is found." Do not bring your grievances here; do not let this day of joy and gladness be marred by your complainings, because I have found him that I had given up for lost. Do not let this day be darkened or obscured by anything! Tell me about your grievances to-morrow; it is meet to-day that we should make merry and be glad. Thy brother was dead and is alive again, lost and is found; and the old man would have his way; he would not give up the joyfulness of his household; and God will not give up his own joy, it is irrevocable. Acceptance to the sinner with God is irrevocable! There is nothing more encouraging to the sinner than this great fact, that when once received by God, the reception is irrevocable; no accusation put forth by an elder brother can have any avail; but those who have once come to the Father through Jesus Christ is fully and completely received, and that for ever.

Now, brethren, do I speak truth, when I say that there are some of you here who care nothing about all this? Care nothing about your alienation from God? Nothing about conversion; nothing about acceptance with God? Perhaps there are those who say we are quite satisfied and will leave well alone. But you cannot, if you are still unconverted it is not well with you. Be you the judges—is it well with the child who has a kind and loving father, and who is disobedient to that father? No! you reply at once, that it is not well with such a child. Well then you are he. You are the disobedient child, your conscience accuses you and convicts you of the truth of this, and therefore I ask you, is it well with you? Is it well with the man who is sinking into perdition? No. But wherever is there a man incurring the risk that you are incurring that is not sinking to perdition? Oh, you are in jeopardy! Is it well with the man who hears the message which you have heard to-night and disregards it? Nay, it cannot be well! And if you persevere in this disregard, I will put it to you whether, when your father cometh, when that fatal day cometh, it will not be to your unutterable confusion that you shall learn what I think will turn out to be the most appalling and tremendous fact in the universe, that that God of mercy and compassion of whom I have been speaking to-night will be found to be a God of justice as well; and then it will not suffice that you plead and expostulate, for then seeing that you have preferred sin to salvation, you will die in your transgressions. Then his work will be short; the bowels of his compassion may be shut up! If you won't be expostulated with, you must receive the reward of the guilty one, and instead of receiving a robe of righteousness, you will be immersed in blackness and darkness for ever! But I forbear, my brethren. Yes, brethren, I forbear; but do not think it is not so, but remember the "judgments of the Lord are sure."

What I have been speaking to you upon now shows the goodness of God. Everything seems to breathe of mercy! Everything in this parable speaks to you of his love. But what is the message you have been listening to? What are the prayers—I can answer for it—which have been offered up on my behalf, in preaching to you to-night? What is the intense solicitude with which the angels of God have been watching you; but to know how you will decide to-night! What strange work of your own seeking will you be ready to forego for the sake of Christ! What is it which you now feel so intensely? It may be a throe of agony of your new birth unto righteousness: improve it: you are born again! Neglect it: you perish! Take advantage of it: you are heir of God—joint heir with Jesus Christ! Neglect it, and you continue a child of wrath, and your own conscience bears witness that you deserve to be a child of wrath, if God's mercy like this does not move you, nothing can!

And now let me say to you in conclusion, what God saith to you—"As I live saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they should turn from their wickedness and live." "Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die? saith the Lord."

I commend you, brethren, to God's blessing, and this message to your serious attention.

THE GIFT OF GOD.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, MAY 4, 1851,

BY THE HON. AND REV. B. W. NOEL, M.A.

AT EXETER HALL.

"Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewst the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink ; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water."—John iv. 10.

In endeavouring to expound this passage, and to impress its truths upon our minds, we are at once led to ask, what did our Lord mean by this "gift of God?" "If thou knewst the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink ; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water." Many think, that by the gift of God is meant the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the chief gift of God—his "unspeakable gift ;" especially as he has said of himself previously to this—"God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." But there are various reasons which, I think, may induce us to believe that it was not the Lord Jesus Christ himself who was meant by it, but rather the Holy Ghost, who is constantly spoken of as the gift of God to sinners. The Lord Jesus Christ thus speaks of him in the fourteenth chapter of this Gospel—"I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever." Here the Holy Spirit is termed the gift of God to the disciples of Christ. So in the second chapter of Acts, when the Apostle Peter addressed an assembled multitude ;—and a crowd as large as this gathered within these walls felt the effect of the power of the word, and gave themselves up at once to the God of grace—the word of power which especially worked upon their consciences and won their hearts was this—"Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." And continually did the Apostles, in preaching Jesus, insist upon this particular gift. You read again in the fifth chapter of Acts, and at the thirty-first verse—"Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. And we are his witnesses of these things ; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him." I will only quote one other passage ; but the passages are numerous which speak of the Holy Ghost as the gift of God to sinners. "While Peter yet spake these words," we

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read in Acts x. 44, 45, "the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word. And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost." As the Holy Spirit is termed the gift of God thus frequently, so it is especially suited to this occasion, to understand the terms relating to him; for the Lord Jesus Christ is, as far as I remember, spoken of as the gift of God to the world. And our Saviour was here speaking of the gift of God to individuals. And further, our Saviour clearly contrasted this good gift which he was ever willing to bestow with that which the Samaritan woman was reluctant to bestow. She remembered how her nation was despised and hated by the Jews, and was surprised that a Jew should have asked a favour from her, and she was obviously reluctant to grant it, simple as it was, to give him a draught of water from the well. Jesus then contrasted the gift he was willing to bestow with that which she was reluctant to bestow. She was not willing to give him a little water from the well; but he was willing to give her "living water"—which was the gift of God. Now that living water as elsewhere spoken of, is explained to mean the Holy Spirit. The Lord Jesus Christ, in addressing a vast crowd of Jews said—"If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." This he spake to many thousands of Jews who were assembled at the Passover, at Jerusalem; and he declared on that occasion, that this gift would be such as should not only bless them, but flow forth through their conversation and life upon the heart as dew, and bless others also. Hence it is said, "this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive."

Again: we are told that the woman would have been compelled to ask for this gift, if she both knew the Holy Spirit, and Jesus who spake to her. But if she had known simply that Jesus was the Messiah, and knew nothing of the Holy Spirit, of which she was at present profoundly ignorant, then I do not see how it would be true, that if she had known the gift of God, she would have asked of him, and he would have given her living water, inasmuch as she might have known him, and yet not know that he had the Spirit to bestow. Hence then the gift of God we may take to mean the Holy Spirit; and the statement of our Lord is this—that if she had known the Holy Spirit, and if she had known Jesus Christ, then she would have asked of him for that blessing, and asking, she would have obtained it.

Before, however, we apply it to ourselves, we are led to ask, was this a special statement made to this woman, or is it a general truth spoken to all? Now there are two things which show that it is spoken to us no less than to her. First, because our nature is the same as hers; and if the effect of this knowledge would have been upon her mind, that she should pray for the Holy Spirit, a similar effect must be produced upon ours by the same knowledge. And next, we may assume that this is meant for us as well as for her, because it is distinctly testified of the Lord Jesus, that he has lost nothing of his compassion to man by his ascension to glory; but is still, as the Apostle Paul testifies—"The same yesterday, to day, and for ever," unchanging in nature and glory, unchanging in character and disposition; and, if therefore he said to her, If you had asked me for the Holy Spirit you would have had it; so he says to us no less, If you ask me for it you shall have it.

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Here then are the four points to which our attention is directed by the words of our Redeemer. In the first place, no one would be led to ask for the Holy Spirit unless he thought that gift of great value. There are many reasons why persons should not ask for it, reasons of great power; and unless the gift is of vast value, the knowledge of it would not prompt any one to pray; hence therefore our Lord said, If you knew the gift you would pray for it. His statement involves the fact, that the gift is of inestimable value. That is the first point for our consideration to-day. And next, the gift, though great and precious, is far beyond our natural reach, and as a man would never think of grasping a star or the sun, because it might be a bright and valuable inheritance, inasmuch as it is wholly out of his power; so unless we can see distinctly that the blessing may be ours, the knowledge of its existence would not prompt us to pray. Hence it is necessary, in the second place, that we should know the power of the Lord Jesus to bestow the gift, and his readiness to give it; and then, if we know his power and readiness to give it, we shall pray for it. This is the second point, therefore, to which these words call our attention. First, the value of the gift; and, secondly, the power and readiness of him to bestow it. If we knew this, our Lord states in the third place, that we must necessarily pray for it: that our nature is such, that we are so constituted, and in such circumstances that if we get this knowledge, the consequence necessarily is, that we shall pray for it. "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink: thou wouldest have asked him." Vile as you are, ignorant as you are, inveterate as your evil habits are, if you did but know this, you would ask. I know nothing else about you. I know nothing of your natural capacities, nothing of your dispositions and tempers; I only know this, if you knew the value of this gift, and the readiness of the Lord to give it you, you would have asked for it. This is the third thought we have to consider, and the fourth thing is the way; we are to ask for it; and there is not one who asks who shall be denied—"He would have given thee living water." That is the fourth thing we have to consider. Now, may God enable us to listen as becomes those who have a soul to be saved; as becomes those who have a God to serve; as becomes those who are placed in this world for a few moments, and who will then be sent to give an account to God for all the privileges enjoyed and for this day amongst the rest.

First, my hearers, we have to consider the value of this gift. Now the gifts of God are innumerable and precious, beyond thought. Everything around us is God's gift to man. This light that dawns upon us, and the eye that emits the light, are all his, and that which has gathered us together; all those productions of human industry and skill are admitted to be his gifts. His are the materials out of which they are made: his the talent that formed them: his the skill of the hand as well as the genius of the mind—all are given by him. And when you look at that vast receptacle of the products of human industry, all the blessings of human civilization, of which it is the type and specimen, then you may say how great and good is that God who gave us all these. His are these eyes and these hands of ours. His these nobler minds. He gave intelligence to the eye, and skill to the hand, all God's gifts are bestowed with more than the liberality of a prince upon us by

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not done so ; and how many are there here now who have not made up their minds to ask for it ? The true reason is because you are still profoundly ignorant. You know something of this gift as a theory, but your mind does not rest in it as a truth. I may come to a correct knowledge of any strange theory which may be brought to my mind, but if I find or believe it to be false, it has no effect upon my mind. Thus, if you know this truth merely as a statement, I wonder not that you have not sought the gift. You have not prayed, and you will not pray if you do not feel that you are a guilty sinner ; if you do not feel that you are in danger of eternal death ; if you do not know the claim of the great God upon you, then what is the Holy Spirit to you, or what do you want to know of Jesus. Your proud heart wants neither a Holy Spirit nor a Saviour. You neither serve God the Father nor trust in God the Son, nor seek the sanctification of God the Spirit ; but this is because you are utterly blinded, blinded by pride and the love of sin. What is the cause my hearers, that you never yet prayed, that you do not pray now, and perhaps have no intention to pray ? It is because the world has enchain'd and entangled you, and you cannot burst yourselves from its thrall-dom. It is because the love of sin holds your affections, and you cannot now resolve to break through its bonds. It is because the natural pride and self-complacency of your hearts feels not the want of that inestimable gift. If you were arrested on account of some crime that you had committed, and were told that you might have a respite or pardon if you sought for it, would you not do everything that was requisite to obtain it ? The Lord Jesus Christ does not speak here to persons who think not, but to those who think. And did you know that your heart was corrupt, and that nothing but the Holy Spirit could make it whole : if you knew that you were sinful and unbelieving, and that nothing but the Holy Spirit could make you embrace the truth ; if you knew that you were in danger of misery, and yet capable of joy, then would you pray, yes, you would pray as Joseph prayed for mercy, as Joseph sought to move the pity of his brethren, and save him from a dreadful death, as he supposed, when they threw him into the pit ; or as the Siro-pheneian woman prayed, and would take no refusal. If you knew these truths you would pray as Paul prayed at Damascus, when for three days and nights he could neither sleep nor eat, nor do anything but pray, till he received the blessing—you would pray so, I say, if you knew the gift of God aright.

If you knew the gift of God, and asked for it, you would receive it. Prayer never failed yet, and never will. "Jesus answered and said unto her, if thou knewst the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink ; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water." That grace of the Holy Spirit which quenches the thirst of the soul, is a grace which once bestowed satisfies for ever. And remember what Jesus Christ himself said—"I say unto you, ask, and it shall be given you ; seek, and ye shall find ; knock, and it shall be opened unto you : for every one that asketh receiveth ; and he that seeketh findeth ; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone ? Or if he ask a fish will he give him a serpent. If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them

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that ask him." The blessing is therefore within the reach of those who pray for it ; and if any man prays aright, he will have it. The Apostle Paul, in his Epistle to the Romans, speaks to the same purport—" There is no difference between the Jew and the Greek, the same Lord is rich unto all that call upon him." He is rich to bestow every blessing that you ask him. The Lord Jesus Christ though raised to a throne of glory, desires gifts for his people, and he bestows them in liberal abundance. Subject yourselves to him and you will be safe, seek for the blessing, and you shall have it for your everlasting welfare. He is true and never yet deceived any one. He shed his precious blood upon the cross that his enemies might be subdued and reconciled. He is faithful and never changes. So surely then is it, that if you offer this prayer of faith, you will obtain this unspeakable gift of the Spirit.

Now let me ask you, my hearers, to what conclusions ought these reflections to bring you ? What conclusions have they brought you to ? I have first to ask you whether when you have heard, and I trust believed, that the Lord Jesus Christ is a Saviour, and that he is ready at any moment to bestow upon you the gift of his Holy Spirit, did you ask the bestowment of that gift as the free mercy of God ? I ask every rational being in this room, whether you are resolved that, if it be possible, at all cost, and by any possible effort, it shall be yours ? If not, all I have said is thrown away. These truths are to you like the empty air, if you are not resolved so to seek salvation. The world retains its empire in your hearts ; the devil has you enthralled ; you are like a man with a chain upon his limbs. You must be unchained, or you will perish. Do you value the gift of the Holy Spirit as essential to you ? Do you know that Jesus Christ is able and willing to give it ? Are you resolved that if it be possible it shall be yours ? Will you get the blessing for which God formed you, and without which you never can have either hope or peace ? Do you know its value ? Let me ask again, and are you resolved it shall be yours ? Will you take the right course to obtain it ?

But mark, it is impossible that you should get the Holy Spirit by any inherent power or merit of your own or of any other man's. Neither can you command it. It is free as the air that blows upon you. But if you would receive it, you must come humbly before God, and pray for it as a sinner who does not deserve it ; but hopes for it in consequence of his great mercy. Tell him you must be saved or perish ; tell him you ask his mercy because he is the great king ; tell him that because you have received ten thousand benefits and blessings, you ask him for a yet greater and better ; tell him that because he has given his Son Jesus Christ you can believe he will give you the Holy Spirit. Go and ask in the name of Christ ; go and ask the enthroned Saviour himself that this blessing may be yours forthwith. Will you go from this Hall to-day and make this request ; and resolve that whatever difficulty should stand in the way or sins seek to throw you back, you will not cease to pray till you have obtained the blessing and God has changed your heart ?

Perhaps you are shrinking from it yet. You will not arise erect from theavery of sin and ensure the best of blessings. You shrink both from duty and happiness. Then will you once more hear the friendly counsel of one

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who wishes you well. You must know the value of this gift or you never will pray; and you must take means to know it. God does not work miracles upon us, but employs suitable means. He requires you to do your duty, and he has given you the means to do it. Go forth to-morrow to the various duties and engagements of life, and though you must mingle with a frivolous and thoughtless world, fulfil the duties of a man as you ought; but still remember this world is only a lodging-house, not your home. You are pilgrims not citizens. If you would not finally repent that you ever lived, then make this the grand study of your life to know Christ and obtain the gift of the Holy Spirit. Take not your eyes off this truth till it has penetrated your hearts; till you feel that it is the greatest gift of God.

Many of us, I trust, do feel the value of this gift; and have experienced a blessed change of heart. We now love what we formerly hated, and care for what we neglected. We can now look at eternity and heaven as our final dwelling-place, and hope there to share the joy and honours which our Saviour and our Lord has to bestow. If you do the same, God will honour you with the same blessings.

May God add his blessing to his word, and he shall have all the glory.

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The following Numbers of the *Penny Pulpit* contain Sermons by the Hon. and Rev. B. W. NOEL, M.A.

- No. 52, The example of Joseph set before the young.
67-68, The condition and claims of London.
143, On Intemperance.
1,068, The temptation of Christ.
1,092, The wheat and the chaff.
1,097, Christ curing the paralytic.
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1,395-97, Two Farewell Sermons at St. John's Chapel, Bedford Row, on leaving the Church of England.
1,444, Address at his baptism.
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THE CITY OF REFUGE.

A Sermon

PREACHED ON SUNDAY MORNING, MAY 11, 1851,

BY THE REV. J. BEAUMONT, D. D.

AT EXETER HALL.

"That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us"—
Hebrews vi. 18.

Or the grandeur of truth; of the origin of man's redemption; of the means whereby it has been procured; of the privileges which it confers upon the redeemed in this life, and the glories and beatitudes which it secures to them in the life to come;—these are the things the knowledge of which belongs to our peace; things compared with which the gains of business, the accumulations of wealth, the splendours of science, the discoveries of philosophy, the charms of sense, are lighter than vanity, and less than nothing: for what is the chaff to the wheat? What the shadow to the substance? What time to eternity? What finite to infinite? What are the pleasures of sense which seduce and destroy the sons of vanity compared with the pleasures of godliness, the joys of redemption?

The Epistle to the Hebrews—one of the substantial products of inspiration in the New Testament—has a specific value all its own: it throws a blaze of light on all the previous parts of scripture: it is itself a standing finger post to the scriptures of the Old Testament; and lest any one should turn away from the Old Testament, as though it were not fitted to nourish the faith, or feed the hope, or influence the love, or kindle the devotions of the man under the dispensation of the gospel—lest any should turn away from it as though it were a mere element of a Christian schoolboy, containing but the rudiments of Christian scholarship, the Epistle to the Hebrews is before us, a part of New Testament inspiration which throws an everlasting interest over the scriptures of the Old Testament. The two Testaments, indeed, are like the olive trees planted in the courts of the house of the Lord, or like two golden candlesticks destined to shine for the light, and guidance, and safety, and blessedness of the church, so long as the church militant shall last. Now, the chapter before us from which I have taken the words of the text abounds with references to the Old Testament scriptures. "And we desire," says the Apostle, at the beginning of the paragraph, "that every one of you do show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end: that ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises. For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater he sware by himself, saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee. And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise. For men verily swear by the greater: and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife. Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: [then comes the text] That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us." And now your preacher will proceed to preach unto you Jesus.

"For ever his dear, sacred name
Shall dwell upon our tongue,
And Jesus and salvation be
The theme of every song."

And let me say to you at once, that if any of you are now lying in the pit of an unconverted state, the cords of salvation are let down to you, that taking hold of them, you may, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, be drawn up out of the pit into the light of the living. Consider what I say; and may the Lord give you understanding in these things!

First, allow me to bring before your consideration the view given of the Saviour in the text. He is called "the hope set before us." In the Scriptures of truth we read of hope that is in us, hope that is laid up for us, and hope that is set before us. The happiness of heaven—heaven itself—its light and glory, its songs, and its blessedness—this is the hope laid up for us: that good

work of the Holy Spirit's operation on the heart, here and now, whereby we look for the former, and for the earnest of it, is the hope that is in us: and our Lord Jesus Christ himself, the only foundation and hope, for sinner or for saint, for pardon or for holiness, is the hope set before us.

I need not inform my intelligent hearers that there is in the language I have read an obvious allusion to the institutions of the theocracy of the Jews, according to which there were certain cities provided and ordained for the reception and shelter of the man-slayer: fleeing to one of these desirable asylums from the fury of the avenger of blood, he was safe, his life secured, his person charmed, his body invulnerable; and all by the laws of the realm. A most expressive emblem were these cities of refuge under the law of Christ Jesus under the gospel. What the city of refuge was to the man-slayer, that Christ Jesus is to the sinner. The cities of refuge under the law were the only legal place of shelter for the man-slayer; and our Lord Jesus Christ himself is the only legitimate ground of hope for any of the sinners of mankind. But for him we have no hope. I do not say we have no feeling of hope; the feeling of hope may exist where the ground of hope does not; but I say that but for Christ Jesus we have no hope, no ground of hope at all as sinners. A few reflections of natural conscience, I think, will be sufficient to show you that as to the pardon of sin here, as to the happiness of the soul in the separate state hereafter, and as to the resurrection of the body in circumstances of beauty, immortality, and purity—that as to these things nature can give us no hope at all. As to the pardon of sin here, nature may sigh for it, cry for it, long for it, groan for it; but as Bishop Stillingfleet said—or rather, Howe before him—there are many stars in the heaven, one teaching this and another teaching that, one looking this way and another looking that way; but there is no star in the heavens pointing a poor sinner to a Saviour. Take the question, "What must I do to be saved?" Take it to nature in all her kingdoms, in all her realms, in all her laboratories, in all her chambers of mystery; take it here and there, and knock at every door, and put the question; but there is no response, no answer at all. Nature, philosophy, science, all are dumb to that great question, "What must I do to be saved?" As to the happiness of the soul in the separate state hereafter, nature can tell us nothing certain about that: it is fallible conjecture, not certain knowledge; ardent wish, not positive assurance; a feeble flickering, not undoubted substantive, absolute revelation. And as to the resurrection of the body, after it has slept the sleep of a thousand generations—its resurrection in beauty, immortality and glory—that is a doctrine so peculiar to revelation that it never was once so much as dreamed of by any of the sages of antiquity as being contained within the whole circle of Divine truth. But, my brethren, my fellow countrymen, my fellow men, there is hope for all these things in the Lord Jesus Christ. Oh thou hope of Israel! to whom shall we go but unto thee? Thou hast the words of eternal life. In the designation from all eternity of our Lord Jesus Christ to the work of substitution to our guilty race, we see a rich purpose of Divine mercy towards it, breaking up, developing itself, flowing off, running out, going away. In the incarnation of Christ in the fulness of time, we see the foundation laid on which the superstructure of our salvation—arch on arch, tier on tier, in all the loveliness of its divine beauty, in all the fulness of its divine perfection—is reared. In the suffering, cross, passion, death, and burial of our Lord Jesus Christ, we see the price and purchase of our redemption; in his resurrection, ascension, and triumphant session at the right hand of the Majesty on high, we see the pledge, pattern, and security of our salvation; whilst the revelation, the gift, the grant of all in this Book and in this Gospel, sets before the hand of faith and the eye of hope, salvation with eternal glory. So true as well as so beautiful—so just as well as so metaphorical is the representation given in the text. *He is emphatically "the hope set before us."*

In the second place, I proceed to notice, for a moment, the conduct of the man described in the text in reference to this blessed object. He is said to "flee for refuge," and to "lay hold upon it." In this there is an allusion to the institutions already referred to—namely, the flight of the man-slayer to the city of refuge. Methinks I descry the man-slayer looking behind him: he sees the avenger of blood; he sees the horrible burning frown upon his brow, he hears the dismal tramp of his feet; and away he flies; he stops not, turns not out of his course, but presses on and on with accelerated speed, until at length, all panting and breathless, he enters the hallowed gates of the city of refuge,

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and enters into peace. Such is the flight of the sinner's soul to the arms of Christ Jesus. This representation sets before us the case of a man struck with a conviction of guilt, smitten with an apprehension of danger, despairing of relieving himself, coming out of himself, and trusting to another. These are some of the steps which lie at the foundation of that great change which the scriptures call conversion—salvation—that change which if a man undergoes not, it were better that he had never been born. Not indeed that the sinner was always found in the attitude of flight towards the city of refuge. Formerly the sinner was easy in his sins. The secrecy of his sins, and the example of the multitude; the hope of a long life; the distance of the day of judgment; some loose notions of the mercy of God floating in his brain, coming he knew not whence, and leading he knew not whither;—to these things he looked for relief from his melancholy when it came over him—and sometimes it would come over him; or else, perhaps, he attempted to still the enemy and the avenger by plunging into scenes of mirth and revelry and dissipation. But now that the conscience of the sinner is under the arrest of the Holy Ghost—now that the thunders of Sinai are rolling around him, and the lightning flashes of indignation against sin are perceived by him—now, stricken, smitten, convinced, convicted, he falls down, and he feels, just as I believe Adam felt in the garden of Eden, on the back of his great offence, that he has nothing to screen him from the eye, or shelter him from the wrath of Omnipotence. He looks this way and that way, before him and behind him; but there is no refuge for him. At this period, observe the method of salvation by Jesus Christ in the gospel unfold itself to his view. And oh! what new charms he now discovers in that method. The very name of Jesus, which was before an insipid sound, is now to him like music. His soul leaps within him to know that "God is in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing to men their trespasses;" his heart dances for joy when he finds that "it is a faithful saying that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." But observe: his conviction of guilt, and danger, and ruin, being now no longer superficial, but pervading, individual, and thorough, he is not satisfied with this merely general representation of the matter: it is not now enough for him to know in so many general terms that God is merciful, and that Christ is a Saviour; he now narrowly pries into the whole affair, into the authority and commission of Christ to save, into his ability and his qualifications to save, into his willingness and readiness to save. As to the authority and commission of Christ to save sinners, the awakened sinner is glad to find that Jesus Christ is God's Son, that God sent him into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved. He now finds that Jesus Christ is chartered to save, legalized to save, authorized to save.

"Commissioned from his Father's throne,
To make his grace to sinners known."

He hears, as it were, the voice coming from the more than immortal glory, saying: "This is my beloved Son, hear ye him; he shall show salvation unto all the nations." Having found a Saviour commissioned to save, he now looks into his ability and qualifications to fulfil this commission; and all his anxiety on this subject is met and relieved by the four evangelists, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, who, like four trumpeters, are standing east, west, north, and south, telling men what Christ has done and suffered to save them. Led by these evangelists he goes to Bethlehem, and sees the great sight there; and entering into the stable, and looking into the manger, he sees the Aurora blush for the world's redemption; and as he gazes on the infant Jesus, he feels as if he could fill the manger with his tears. Led by the evangelists he goes to the wilderness, and there watches the struggle between Christ and Satan. Satan had triumphed in the garden; he tried to triumph in the wilderness: he had conquered the first Adam; he laboured mightily to conquer the second Adam. But Christ triumphed in the wilderness; Satan was routed; the head of the serpent was crushed; and the awakened sinner beholds the triumphant Saviour. Led by the evangelists, he goes on through his life, his miracles, and sufferings. Passing through the garden of Gethsemane, he is conducted to the hill of Calvary, and he walks about it and about it, and there beholds the Lamb of God taking away the sins of the world. The sword of justice had a commission to smite the man that was Jehovah's fellow; it smote him in Bethlehem; it smote him all along the highway of his life, even to Calvary. On Calvary the strokes of the sword fell heavy; the glances of that sword then darkened the

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sun ; the strokes of the sword shook earth, shook hell ; it kept smiting and smiting the man that was God's fellow, till at last he cried, "It is finished." Then the sword fell down at the foot of the cross, hushed, lulled, pacified ; and it lay there till the third hallowed morning, when it was found changed into a sceptre of mercy ; and that sceptre of mercy has been waving among mankind ever since, and it is waving now ; it is waving in this assembly ; it is so waving here that any one may stretch the hand, and touch the sceptre, and whoever touches it shall live, and may live for ever. Now, when he has found a Saviour able to save to the uttermost, he follows him ; he sees him laid in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea ; he watches there till the third hour of morning, when he sees the great stone rolled away ; then he sees the Saviour rise, and hears him singing : "I have conquered death and hell ; having overcome the sharpness of death, I open the kingdom of heaven to all believers." And now the awakened sinner sees the Saviour ascend, not carried away in a chariot of fire, not removed by a whirlwind, not lifted off by any violent commotion of the elements of nature ; but rising slowly, gradually, softly, breaking all the laws of gravitation and attraction, ascending up, up, up, until he reaches the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens : there he sits, for his work is done, his task is finished, his enterprise is completed ; having purged our sins by his blood, he sits down at the right hand of the throne of God. I say again, the sinner has now found a Saviour mighty to save. The only remaining point to be settled is this : "What warrant have I to believe that he will save me—a wretch like me ?" There may be salvation, but it may not be for the men of this part of the world ; there may be salvation for some men in this part of the world, but there may not be salvation for me ; there may be salvation for some of this congregation, but is there salvation for me ?" This is settled by the discovery which the awakened sinner now makes of the freeness and the fulness of the gospel, by discovering that Christ came to save sinners, not because they deserved, but because they needed his interposition ; and the clearer, the deeper, the stronger is his conviction of being a sinner, the clearer, the wider, and the straighter does the road open before him to go to God for salvation. And now the battlements of the city walls are just coming fully to view ; and as the man-slayer would promptly disencumber himself of everything which would impede his flight or retard his progress to the city of refuge, so the awakened sinner now puts away the only two things that can hinder any man out of hell from being saved—his sins and his self-righteousness. His sins he breaks off by true repentance ; and as to his self-righteousness, what things were gain to him he now counts loss for Christ. The city being full in view, away he flies ; and coming to Jesus, and clasping his feet, he says : "Blessed Jesus, I come to thee. Thou art my refuge, I lean my helpless soul on thee ; on thee, my high tower, I build my hope ; on thee, my rock, I place my foundation : thou art the Prophet—thy teaching shall be my light ; thou the priest—thy atoning death shall be my justifying righteousness ; that, sprinkled with thy blood, when the destroying angel goes by, I may be saved. Thou King of Zion, I embrace thee, I acknowledge thee, I bow down before thee, and in token of reverence and love, I kiss the Son." Now he has got within the city, and has "a strong consolation."

I now advance to the third and last part of my subject—the privilege and happiness of those who have thus fled to Christ Jesus for refuge. "By two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie," they have "a strong consolation." What is consolation ? It is the relief of the mind under any trouble or pain ; or the presence and enjoyment of a good which is able to prevent altogether, or else carry away and bear down before it, as in a full tide or flowing stream, all evil felt or feared. Two things would occur to the mind of the man-slayer in connection with his flight to the city of refuge. One would be : "Is it true—is it really, absolutely, incontrovertibly true, that if I get to the city of refuge, the avenger dares not, must not touch me ?" The other would be : "Suppose I get to the city, and am secure against the stroke of the avenger, what kind of accommodation and provision shall I find within that city ?" These two things would occur to him on his way to, or on his arrival at the city of refuge ; and if he had had any doubt or uncertainty as to the one or the other, he would have been overwhelmed with confusion, perplexity, and dismay. But he had no doubt ; he knew, he was certain, he was quite sure that, if he got to the city of refuge, the avenger could not touch him, that he would be as safe in the city as if he were in heaven. He also knew that, if he

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got to that city, and should remain in it, all his wants would be supplied, everything necessary for his accommodation and support would be provided for him. Thus he had consolation. Now apply these two things as an illustration of the nature of the happiness of believing in Christ. "There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." "They that believe enter into rest." "Who is he that shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth." What is it you are afraid of? Is it the justice of God? I know the justice of God has the impenitent sinner by the throat, and says, "Pay me what thou owest!" But I know also that the hand of the penitent sinner lays hold on the hope set before him, and justice takes *his* hand off. It must be so; otherwise God were unrighteous in demanding two payments for one debt. "He that believes shall be saved." "There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." What are you afraid of? Is it of the fiery law? The law is not roaring after you if you have got into the city of refuge; it is not uttering its tremendous maledictions against you if you have laid hold of the hope set before you. If you hear anything at all of the demands of the law, it is the echoes of those demands dying away amid the battlements of the city wall; for he to whom you have fled, and on whom you have laid hold, has "magnified the law and made it honourable." Then what is it you are afraid of? Is it of the roaring lion of hell? He is indeed "going about seeking whom he may devour;" but your faith in Christ is a shield wherewith you will quench the fiery darts of the wicked one. Then what is it you have to fear? Is it death? You may give up that fear along with all the other fears; for Jesus, to whom you have come, on whom you have laid hold, has put down death, abolished it, and buried it in his own grave; and has brought life and immortality to light. That is consolation, but that is not the whole of it. I said that the consolation of the man-slayer on reaching the city of refuge would also include an assurance that he should be provided for, while there, with everything necessary for his accommodation and support. This answers to the other half—the happiness of believing in Christ,—which consists in the infinite assurance that God has given the believer that he never shall want any manner of thing that is really good, and that he never shall be in inextricable danger. "The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger;" and well they may; "but they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing." Can that man want water who lives on the brinks of an everlasting spring? Can that man want light who lives in the centre of the eternal sun? No more can you who are in Christ by the power of living faith, want anything really good; for he to whom you have come, and on whom you have laid hold, is the great repository of all conceivable and inconceivable good; it hath pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell. This is happiness; this, consolation.

Now look at the grounds on which this consolation rests. We have it, says the Apostle, "by two immutable things in which it was impossible for God to lie." What are these immutable things? Where are they to be met with? We cannot write the word immutable on the rock; it is constantly wearing away: nor on the sun; the sun himself shall grow old and dull. But there are two immutable things: the word of promise, and the oath of God. These are called the "counsel of God," to intimate that his promise is the declaration of his counsel. Promises very often are the result of anything but counsel; but the promise of God is the counsel of God, the manifestation and publication of his counsel. You will observe, the apostle refers to God's promise to Abraham. And what did God say to Abraham? "Fear not, Abraham; I am thy shield." What is a shield? It is an instrument of defensive warfare, interposed between the body of the man and that of his antagonist, so that before the weapon can touch the man it must go through the shield that is before him. Think of this thy security, O Christian, whilst thou dost lay hold on the hope set before thee! Before thine enemies can do thee real harm they must pierce through Omnipotence. God says, "I am thy shield." Perhaps you ask what you have to do with the promise made to Abraham. Why, just as much as he had, at any rate. It is the design of the apostle in quoting it to show that, if you have like precious faith with Abraham, you have also like precious promises. The promises of God; what are they like? Whereunto shall I compare them? They are like so many silver cords let down from heaven, hanging out from the pavilion of infinite clemency, I had almost said, sent down from the heart of God itself, for the hand of faith to lay hold on. The promise of God is an immutable thing; and by that we have our consola-

tion. But there is another ground of this happiness. What! Another? Another "immutable thing?" Yes; another. Would you have thought it? No; you would not. Could you have thought it? No; you could not. Yet there is another. What! another? Yes; another "immutable thing." What is not the promise of God enough? Is not the counsel of the inviolable Jehovah sufficient? Yes; enough for him,—quite enough for him; but no enough for you, you doubting Christian, you miserable Christian. God knowing the million ills of human life, the million jealousies of the human heart,—knowing the backwardness of your mind, and the slowness of your heart to believe his own eternal word of promise, hath condescended to super add to that, his solemn oath. Oh! that oath of God. "This is as the water of Noah unto me; for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah shall no more fall upon the earth, so have I sworn that I will not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee. The mountains may depart; the hills may be removed; but my loving-kindness will I not take away from thee, Oh! Jacob, saith the Lord." That oath of God; what is it? What can God swear by? Men swear by supreme authority,—superior authority,—a jurisprudence above the party swearing; but by what can God swear? "Because there was no greater, he swear by himself." His word swore by his truth; his truth swore by his faithfulness; his faithfulness swore by his justice. He swore by himself. Oh! the condescension of God; the stooping of God! This is a stretch of condescension beyond which I had almost said the goodness of God cannot go. What is that oath like? Whereunto shall I compare it? Is it not as if Jehovah was laying all the perfections of his nature,—staking the very glory of the Godhead, on the truth of his promise previously made? These are the immutable things by which we have our consolation.

Finally, let me mention the quality of this happiness. It is called in the text, a "strong consolation;" a consolation amongst the most solid and substantial, the most abundant and efficient; a consolation available for every exigency of life, for the solemnity of death, for the crisis of the judgment day. How strong is this consolation? It is stronger than the afflictions of life. If, like Job, you are called to sit among ashes, and are borne down by grief and sorrow; yet, with this consolation, you will bless God. If, like the man who is believed to have written the words of the text, you had your feet made fast in stocks with prisoners; yet, with this consolation, you would sing praises to God at midnight. What a powerful principle religion is! It turns the dungeon into a gate of heaven, the place of stocks into the vestibule of glory. If, like the Hebrews, to whom the language was originally addressed, you were called to bear the spoiling of your goods for Christ's sake; with this consolation, you would bear it joyfully. Soaring on the wings of grace, you may defy the power of affliction, calamity, sickness, and change. He, whose word of promise and solemn oath you have, has said he will be with you "in six troubles; yea, in seven there shall no evil touch thee." Strong consolation! How strong? Stronger than the dread of wrath. Ah! there is no fear like the fear of hell-fire; no dread like the dread of the wrath to come. Many a man has that fear, who never said he had it; many a man's heart has had that dread, who never told any Christian minister or Christian friend of it. Now and then, when a man dies out of the city of refuge, feeling himself out of it, having the command of language, and unable to repress his emotions,—now and then, in such a case, language escapes that fills the by-standers with alarm. I know how they get over it; they say it is delirium. If it were not for the stupefying effect of medicine, or the still more stupefying effect of disease, such would be the terror of the man dying out of the city of refuge, and feeling himself out of it, that if he expressed his feelings, his language would be such that no wife, no sister, no mother, no apothecary, no physician, could bear to be in the room or near him. Oh, what a mountain is gone when the fear of hell is gone! Oh, what a load is removed from the human spirit when the dread of the wrath to come is removed! And it is removed from the man who has fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before him. Strong consolation! How strong? It is not only stronger than all the afflictions of life, and stronger than the dread of the wrath to come, but stronger than the fear of death. Hear the proverb of Solomon. He says: "The wicked is driven away in his wickedness; but the righteous hath hope in his death." Go and see the righteous die. Death has come in at the window; laying his hand upon the heart; freezing up the life-blood of the fountain. Death is there; but Christ is there also.

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Death the last enemy is there ; but Christ, the Lord of life and glory, is there too. Death is there as the servant; Christ as the master. And now the soul of the believer takes its flight out of the body. I was going to say, that the flight of the soul of the believer out of the body into the arms of Christ is not in winter, when light is scarce, and when the road is rough and rugged ; but it is upon the Sabbath day ; for, let a believer die on whichever day of the seven he may, his dying is to him a Sabbath, for on that day he enters into rest. "I heard a voice from heaven saying, Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord." Strong consolation ! How strong ? Stronger than all the terrors of the final judgment, than the desolations of universal nature. The sun that has shone so gloriously for thousands of years over our earth and seas and skies, will one day shine no more ; and the moon, that has known the times of her rising and setting, and that with such mathematical precision and accuracy, will be turned into blood ; the stars will fall from their orbits as figs fall from the fig-tree when in seasons of tempest it is shaken with an untimely wind. Then the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised. And where is the believer ? How does he appear ? Hearing in his grave the last tones, the death-sounds, of the physical universe, the knell of the solar system,—they are like music to him ; they fall on his ear as welcome as the sound of the evening bell to the weary labourer at the close of the day, telling him that the hour of labour and fatigue, and anxiety is over and gone. He awakes ; he dresses ; he robes for the Marriage Supper of the Lamb ; he comes out of his grave ; he sees the great white throne, and him that sits on it ; and he says, "Lo ! this is our God ; we may rejoice and be glad in his salvation ;" and he goes up, and is forever with his Lord. Strong consolation ! Do not imagine, however, that the consolation thus exists strong in the feeling of every Christian always. It is liable to fluctuation ; it fluctuates from a thousand causes—from the state of the weather, from the force of temptation, and from many influences that affect either the body or the mind. But what I mean to say is this—that so long as the Christian has hold of the hope set before him, the ground never gives way under his feet. And do not imagine, on the other hand, that I am an apologist for that low, stinted, dwarfish mode of religious joy so common among us. Why are you not happy Christians ? Why are you not happy, Christian professor, when God has done so much to make you happy ? Why should you be miserable ? Why should you hang down your head like a bulrush, you miserable, you doubting Christian ? I will tell you. You are like a man going through the hot sandy deserts of Arabia, the atmosphere of which is like the atmosphere of red hot stones ; his tongue cleaving to the roof of his mouth, his parched lips burning with fever ;—there he goes trampling on the burning sands, and all the while he has in his hand a cup of cold, crystal water, but he never puts it to his lips. Why do not you drink ? "Why art thou cast down, O my soul ?" Go and say—"Ashamed of the infatuation of unbelief, of the unphilosophical character of unbelief—ashamed of this monstrosity, I will expect the purity of my nature, triumph over the world, victory over the grave, conquest over Satan, a glorious resurrection, and the life eternal of the world to come ; I will expect it ; and all through him who loved me, died for me, and rose again for me, whose I am, and to whom I give myself now, to be his only, and his for ever." That is the happiness resulting from faith in Christ.

Now before I close, let me change my voice—let me alter my address. Are you all within the city of refuge ? Have you entered that city ? Have your eyes seen this salvation ? Or are you dribbling life away in folly ? Are you living in sin ? How goes this question with you ? I must say I fear there are many in this assembly who are not within the city of refuge. Then are you on the way to it ? I must say that I fear there are some here who are not even in the attitude of flight towards the city. My fellow-countrymen, my fellow-sinners, if you are not in the city, if you are not in the attitude of flight towards it, you are living in peril ; every moment the avenger is behind you. You say you do not hear the sound of his footsteps. No, you live in such a hurry. You say you do not see the look of anger on his brow. No, you live in such a fever, with so little Bible reading, so little self-scrutiny, so little prayer. You live in a hurry, you live in a fever ; and suffer me to tell you, whether you hear the sound of the footsteps of the avenger or not, he is behind you, he is following you ; and if he overtakes you

before you reach the city, sinner, you are lost ! God Almighty save you You must be saved by flight. Why should you not flee ? The gates are opened, the road is clear, the invitation is affectionate. Why should you not flee thither ? Many have done so. Manasseh, that infuriated ruffian, murderer, and adulterer, fled thither ; why may not you ? Mary Magdalene who had seven devils, fled thither ; why may not you ? Zacchaeus the publican fled thither ; why may not you ? Thousands upon thousands of the guiltiest of the guilty, and myriads upon myriads of the vilest of the vile have fled thither, and have all found a rock for the trembling foot, and a canopy for the guilty head ; and yet there is room. Fly, sinner, fly ! Make haste ! Are you not ready to come to Christ ? The Bible is ready, the gospel is ready, the Saviour is ready, salvation is ready ; are not you ? Death is ready to seize you, judgment to overwhelm you, eternity to embrace you Don't, don't go about to seek for a righteousness of your own. You might as well try to get a river up the mountain side, or attempt to walk the starry firmament of heaven with your clay feet, as to make a righteousness of your own. Look this way ! Christ, Christ is the hope set before you. "Other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, Jesus Christ." "Neither is there given under heaven a name among men whereby we may be saved, but the name of Christ. Cannot you come to Christ ? You may come to him now, before you go home, before you leave your seat.

"Come all the world ; go sinner, thou ;
All things in Christ are ready now,"

Have you come ? Have you got to the city ? Christ meets you at the gates, and he says to you just what David said to Abiathar—"Abide thou with me, fear not : for he that seeketh my life seeketh thy life : but with me thou shalt be in safeguard."

Instead of addressing you longer, I suppose I ought rather now to thank you for having listened so long as you have done with so much attention. I have brought nothing new to your ears ; and yet I have brought something new, for the gospel is always new ; it is never old and never cold ; its doctrines never grow antiquated, its principles never shrivel up, it fact never decay and collapse ; they are as fresh to-day as they were a thousand years ago, and they will be as fresh a thousand years hence as they are to-day. The glory of the gospel is that, like its Author, it is "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." I look upon this assembly with profound emotion. You are here from all provinces of the country ; and if you were the representatives of the whole world, I should have nothing else to say but what I have said to you. This is the gospel for all mankind. Meet a man where I will, meet him in Exeter Hall, meet him in the so-called church or chapel, meet him as a beggar on the way-side, meet him as an advocate pleading before a judge, meet him in the capacity of a judge seated on the bench, meet him on the throne of the monarch—meet him where I will, and as I will, in whatever condition or phase, in whatever meridian of longitude or line of latitude, this one gospel is the thing for him. There are not two gospels ; there are not two Saviours ; there are not two ways of salvation : this is the Saviour—this the way of salvation.

I must say that I think some place like this should have been thrown open into which those who have come up to the capital from the provinces can meet together for worship. You see each other, you come together ; the law of sympathy takes effect ; brotherhood prevails ; fraternization is felt ; and you clasp your arms together around the gospel. This is the very thing you want. Does music suit the ear, entering into the cavity, flowing along the channels reaching to the brain, and acting thence upon the soul—does music fit the ear ? Does light fit the eye—coming off from the body of the sun, passing over objects in its way, entering the eye, acting through the brain upon the soul ? How beautifully the light fits the eye. Does the key fit the lock, turning its wards, shooting its bolts, and removing all obstructions ? Music does not fit the ear, the light does fit the eye, the key does not fit the lock, so well as the gospel fits the sinner. All the hollows in him are filled with the prominences of the Gospel. I have preached the gospel to you—at least, I trust I have—at least, I believe I have—at least, I feel I have. I hand it over to you ; and I trust I shall find it again in a blade of repentance here, a stalk of faith there, and a ripe sheaf of holiness up yonder. May God bless his word ! Amen.

THE TRUTH.

A Sermon

PREACHED ON SUNDAY MORNING, MAY 18, 1851,

BY THE REV. J. ALDIS,

AT EXETER HALL.

"I am the truth."—John xiv. 6.

THE habit of the Saviour's mind, the frame and tendency of his heart were as strikingly exhibited in small and incidental matters as in those greater and more absorbing ones which prophecy shadowed forth through the whole of his course. He ever discovered a tendency to turn away from that which was earthly to that which was heavenly; and, however magnificent or worldly the occasion, to his mind it was suggestive of some great truth, and it led his heart to the appreciation of that truth in reference to those by whom he was surrounded. Thus, when he sat at the well, he asked water of the woman of Samaria. She, if not absolutely refusing, nevertheless treated him with hesitation or rude indifference. The reply was: "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith unto thee, Give me to drink: thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water." His disciples were gone away to buy food; and when they returned they found him conversing with the woman. He replied to them: "I have meat to eat that ye know not of. My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work." He had performed a miracle by which multitudes had been fed; and many followed him "not because of the miracle, but because they did eat of the loaves and were filled." And he said: "Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for the bread that cometh down from heaven." "I am the true bread." "My Father giveth you the true bread from heaven." So here, Thomas, referring to what he had said before concerning his departure from them, says, "We know not whither thou goest, and how can we know the way? Jesus said: I am the way, the truth, and the life;" turning from his earthly and personal and selfish inquiry to the spiritual and universal and glorious truth connected with the soul's redemption by him. This habit of mind is thus recommended to our notice and for our adoption; that wherever we are, however employed, whatever topic may arrest our attention, whatever pursuit engage our hand, we should live in our state, as we are ever in fact, on the verge of eternity, seeing God in everything, and feeling no strange or rude transition from the occupation of the moment to the sublimest thoughts and

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the most glorious hopes that can engage the expectation and the mind of man. To what does the Saviour here refer? "I am the way, the truth, and the life." Does he intend to affirm a connection betwixt these three, or a subordination of any one to the other? Is there not a harmonious connection? "I am the way to God, the medium of approach, the reconciling Mediator, without whom man cannot look Deity in the face and live. Thus man is brought to God. I am the truth: the communication from him to whom man is thus brought that men may listen to his voice, enter into his mind, become irradiated with his intelligence; the truth from God to man. I am the life: man, thus brought to God by my intercession, learning his divine character and will, in communion with the Spirit and the Word, shall find that life springs out of that truth. Life in the spirit, for all goodly and godly works on earth; life beyond the grave which no decay can touch, death never strike down; the fulfilment of the declaration, "I am the resurrection and the life;" "he that believeth in me shall never die;" "he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live."

We take this truth, then, as the middle point of the three; supposing that men are brought to God by the mediation of Christ, and affirming that, learning and enjoying the truth of God, it will issue in the blessing of present spiritual and future eternal life. Our business, then, this morning shall be, in the first place, to illustrate this position; Christ says, "I am the truth;" in the second place, to attempt a practical application of it.

I. In attempting to illustrate this position in which Christ says, "I am the truth," we shall place it in several relative lights. And we say, first, Christ is the truth in the highest sense of that word; for the word, like many others, is used in very different senses. Persons employ the same term, but they do not mean the same thing. Some by the word truth mean literal accuracy of speech, the mere antithesis to naked falsehood; some understand by it a peculiar and restricted class of theological truths which they are accustomed to speak of, and to recognize as "the truth;" others use the term to denote the mere abstract of that which is true, but especially some philosophical theories and political rules which they supremely admire and trust. Now we use the word at once in a more definite and in a more exalted sense; we use it to denote the whole sum of Christianity as revealed in the person; and proclaimed in the teaching, and illustrated in the life, of Jesus Christ our Lord. We hold that up as the final explication of all mystery and doubt, as the infallible guide to the divinest wisdom, as the supreme law which commands us now, and will judge us another day; as the final test and appeal to which all religious and moral truth must be referred, and by which it must be decided; eclipsing all by its glory, overtopping all by its majesty, swaying all by its authority, and determining all by its decision. In this high sense, high above all other senses, our Divine Master, representing and embodying his religion, stands before you to-day, and says: "I am the truth."

But, secondly, Christ is the saving truth, which no other truth is. As I have said, we understand by the term, the whole sum of the Saviour's communication; yet that term evidently applies, if not with restriction, yet with emphasis, to those peculiarities of the gospel which men are very slow to recognize, and against which they are too frequently hostile. We call them peculiarities, because they are the simplest and most direct offgrowth of the Saviour's mission, and do most clearly and fully embody at once his character and his work. A few simple facts and doctrines constitute the main features of our religion. They are so simple that a child can understand and feel them, and yet they are so profound that the philosopher cannot either fathom or exalt them. They are at once the scandal and the glory of the cross, the secret of its power and the occasion of its rejection. They humble the pride of man, they lay bare the nakedness of our condition and nature, leave no room for self-righteousness or for carnal pride. They exhibit the divine law broken by man's transgression, yet just and good, and therefore unaltered. They proclaim the eternal justice condemning man, yet righteous, and therefore inflexible. The threatening is direct: "the soul that sinneth, it shall die;" the

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declaration is as explicit as it is terrible: "God is angry with the wicked every day." Thus, then, man is before God. Oh, that every heart here this morning might feel that this is true concerning each one in this assembly! By nature and by practice, I say man is guilty, and therefore condemned; depraved, therefore impotent; hopeless, therefore wretched. He has no sacrifice that he can offer, no righteousness that he can boast; his prayers need the exercise of compassion, his virtues need to be forgiven; in himself he is utterly hopeless. This, then, is the mystery of godliness: the Christ, who is the sinless and glorified one, became the representative and the surety of the sinful, took our nature and place, obeyed the law we had broken, endured the penalty we had deserved, is gone to heaven to shed down on our hearts the influence which alone can renew and sanctify. By faith we are united to him, become incorporated with him, are one in holy, ineffable, and eternal union. Thus we are cleansed from our transgression, justified from all condemnation, partakers of the Saviour's spirit, destined to the Saviour's glory. I say this is the saving truth which awakens the world's scorn and ridicule, but which nevertheless was in apostolic times the theme of preaching to which they devoted all their energy, and on which they expended all their love. "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." It was for this in primitive times they suffered, and suffered cheerfully, the loss of everything they had been accustomed most to love, and trust, and honour:—"Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord." It is to this with emphasis, then, we refer when we speak of the words of the text. It is this which Christ represents, covering himself with it as his glory; standing before you this day at once impeaching man's guilt and proclaiming man's salvation. As none other can say it in this respect, our divine Redeemer does say: "I am the truth."

But, in the third place, Christ says: "I am the truth, incomparably the most important of all truth." It is granted, indeed, that no error can be harmless. It is important to remember that every truth must have its use; yet it is equally evident that all truth is not of the same importance. It is not every truth that deserves the highest place in the affections, or that will repay the energies of a man's life; but this is the truth that does deserve that place, and that will repay those efforts, for this is the central, all-pervading truth,—the starting point; if we diverge here, we can only go further and further astray; the foundation,—if this is unsound, the whole superstructure must be overturned when the rain descends and the flood shall beat against it; it is in spiritual science what the law of gravitation is in physical science,—everything must be harmonious with it; error here will involve error everywhere; but if a man's mind and heart are in thorough unison with this, his mind and heart will be in thorough unison with all that shall make up the sum of Divine knowledge on this earth, and the theme of heavenly communication when this world shall have passed away. This truth is as difficult to apprehend, and to prove, and to establish, as it is important in its own nature; the mightiest and the most cultivated minds have in ages past been employed on the attempt to discover it in vain. The first, the most elementary principle of all religious truth was involved in obscurity, if not in contradiction; "the world by wisdom knew not God;" and the confusion and contradiction seemed to go on increasing in helpless and hopeless wretchedness, the more these themes were canvassed unaided by the light of revelation. I know, indeed, that the moderns have professed to be able to discover and to determine all religious truth, but they have in fact discovered nothing at all; they have borrowed something from the gospel, and then have invariably dwarfed its grandeur and paralysed its strength. We must come to the book of God, and to that alone can we come with the hope and confidence of ascertaining that which shall on the one hand be clear, and on the other hand authoritative. This truth is the result of miraculous communication. All other truth comes to us through the senses or intuition from the works of nature; it was written by the finger of the Great Architect in the frame-work of nature at the first; but this is the off-growth of special providence and of miraculous communication. "God spake in time

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past to the fathers by the prophets : in these last days he hath spoken to us by his Son." The signs and wonders which were wrought to attest Christ's mission, and the yet more wonderful moral miracles wrought as the result of that mission, are voices from heaven speaking in the sanctuary of man's conscience and of man's heart, as, in accents of thunder, they say : " See that you refuse not him that speaketh." This truth is of unspeakable importance in its issue. Other truth will affect your intelligence,—if you have it not you are ignorant, if you have it you are learned ; other truth may affect your conscience, your luxuries, your civilization, your personal freedom,—if you have it not you may be savages and slaves, if you have it you may be civilized and free : but this affects your soul, your conscience, your character, your eternity,—if you have it, you are reconciled to God, will be accepted in the judgment, will be raised to endless blessedness beyond the grave ; if you have it not, you are condemned now, will be sentenced in the last judgment, the curse is upon you, the doom inevitable before you. Nothing can compare with this, therefore ; we take it and place it by itself in lone and unapproachable majesty. "I am the truth." Oh, that the world were full of it, that our minds understood it, that our hearts loved it !

In the fourth place, Christ says : " I am the truth," to contradict and refute the world's falsehood. To a reflective mind it must be very painful to remember that the dominion of error and of falsehood should have been so long-continued, so wide-spread, so fatal. Revelation surveys the millions of the earth's population, and says : " the whole world lieth in the wicked one ;" and of that wicked one the brief and significant description is : " He is a liar from the beginning." The first temptation was a lie—" Ye shall not die, but ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil ;" and ever after that time, and in accordance with that pattern, men were deceived, degraded, corrupted, destroyed,—all minds were pervaded by the spirit, all pursuits misled by the impulses of falsehood. True, there were but few who suspected the existence of it, fewer still who had the energy to detect and expose it, and fewest of all who had an earnest disposition to do so. Thus, in the dominion of error, it came to pass that history, with a slight substratum of fact, became little else than a tissue of fables, the joint production of misrepresentation and mistake ; philosophy, notwithstanding its high pretensions and some of its noble works, became for the most part a mere logomachy or imposing sophism ; poetry was employed to dazzle the imagination, to blind the understanding, to decorate the vices ; the intercourse of man with man became a net work of selfishness,—professed generosity, actual rapacity,—empty pretences repaid by universal suspicion. These honours and distinctions of life ultimately were transferred, if not from the virtues to the vices, yet to the accidents of man's external lot; the circumstances of birth, the triumphs of brute force, the successes of chicanery and fraud, reaped all the advantages and bore all the honours that were due to intelligence and industry and goodness ; government, which had begun in force, ended in cajolery and fraud ; violence and falsehood became the twin pillars upon which the sacred realities of law and justice were doomed to repose ; while religion, which professes to be, and above all things ought to be, the supreme and unadulterated truth, because the most complicated and abandoned lie ; while idle ceremonies, double-tongued oracles, bare-faced imposture, incredible legends, were enshrined in temples to command the service and to receive the homage of earth's millions ; till Christ stood in the deluded world, and confronted all its delusions, and said : " I am the truth." But since then, (for our nature is ever the same,) even the gospel has by the fiend been thus perverted ; and the truth, caricatured, imprisoned, oppressed, has been made to answer the ends and to achieve the triumphs of the former lie. We have need incessantly, therefore, to refer to the first principle ; it is our prime duty, it is our only hope, to correct everything by this,—" I am the truth ;" leaving our minds and hearts to bathe themselves in the fulness of its light, and the ineffableness of its glory.

In the fifth place, Christ say : " I am the truth," notwithstanding the indifference that men generally manifest in relation to it. I know of nothing wh.ch

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men are so reluctant to honour, and in reference to which they manifest such inveterate dislike; and that dislike is always measured by the simplicity and spirituality with which the gospel is exhibited. If, indeed, you will lower its tone and destroy its vitality; if you will represent it as a philosophy amenable at the bar of man, to be adopted or rejected, in whole or in part, as man's passions or caprice shall decide; if you will be content to treat it and to regard it as a speculation or an opinion to be classed with all other speculations and opinions; then it will not only be tolerated, but perhaps applauded; but that which is thoroughly evangelical is disliked and rejected, — disliked and rejected just in proportion as it is thoroughly evangelical. And the extent of this dislike is as remarkable as its intensity: parties the most dissimilar and the most hostile are here at one; the abettor of atheism, and the abettor of superstition, the most violent Socialist and the proudest Pharisee, are of one heart and of one mind, when the truth as it is in Jesus is to be rejected. Of "this sect" we know not only that it is "everywhere spoken against," but that it is spoken against by all. It is with the doctrine as it was with the man: Herod and Pontius Pilate can become friends when it is to be arraigned and denounced, and set at nought. These men, indeed, cannot help perceiving sometimes that the doctrine thus rejected has produced wonderful and beneficent results. Sometimes those results are denied, sometimes explained away, always attributed to any cause but the right one; and when no other cause can be assigned they assign that ancient one, "He casteth out devils by Beelzebub the prince of devils." These men (they say) are fanatical, it is true, but their fanaticism has accidentally wrought out some advantage. These men manifest no corresponding intensity of feeling in reference to other things which palpably work not that good, but do as palpably work much harm. The habits of business every day, and the haunts of pleasure in almost every scene, are continually engulphing the energy, the property, the character, the lives of men; and yet these objectors show no indignation, and utter no remonstrance. The most egregious falsehoods are believed; the most hateful vices are cherished, the most contemptible delusions find patrons and rewarders; the cruelest superstitions are enshrined in temples, and honoured with distinction, and heralded by pomp, and assisted by power; and these men can stand by in cold complacency, or look on with absolute delight. But when the gospel lifts its voice, proclaims the world's danger, denounces the world's sin, invites men to the Saviour, and tells them there is no salvation elsewhere, the indignation is deep, the cry is loud. "Away! away! it is not fit that we should believe it."

In the sixth place, Christ is true, notwithstanding the world's hostility. It is against the doctrine of the cross, in its spirituality and simplicity that the hostility of the world has ranged. Men always proclaim the estimate they form of the power of a doctrine by the hostility they cherish against it. They may affect to despise it as beneath their notice, to ridicule it as contemptible, and to pass by it as weak; but they will not persecute it unless they hate it; they will not hate it unless they fear it. Thus it is that the world, which has refused to exalt religion in affection and love, has exalted it in the only way left—by hostility and dislike. To bear that has been at once the distinction and the trial of the friends of the Redeemer. The seed of the woman has been thus pointed out most unmistakably by the enmity of the seed of the serpent. You may ally yourselves to all other schemes, and advocate all other doctrines, not only with impunity, but with applause; but to have been the friend of this truth has often been perilous, and always, in the world's esteem, involving some measure of dishonour. It is thus that the world has testified to the majesty, the divinity, and the ultimate triumphs which this glorious truth is destined to achieve; for it is thus that Christ stands at the head of all his people, identifies himself with his people, and gives to them the pledge of ultimate and glorious triumph. I grant, there have been lulls in the tempest, there have been truces in the strife; the professed friends of truth have been latitudinarian, indifferent, silent, and they then have been allowed to pass unmolested; but if they have arisen to assert the claims and enforce the authority of the

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Saviour's doctrine, they have been seized and counted as sheep for the slaughter from Abel's murder to the immolation of the sinless sacrifice. Since then, through long ages of sorrow and distress, martyrs and confessors have adorned the doctrine of the cross with the virtue of their lives, and sealed that doctrine with the blood of their hearts; while he, who is at once their centre, their stay, their glory, whom all turns, on whom all depends, whom all declare themselves willing to follow, standing up in the midst of them all, and above them all, in the baptism of blood, exclaims—"I am the truth." And the world's hostility has put the seal to the declaration. Had it not been mighty, it would never have awakened that hostility; had it not been right-hearted, it would never have dared it; had it not been immortal, it would never have survived it; but having awakened it, and having dared it, and having survived it, in the person of Christ, and in the truth that the Saviour has proclaimed, we see it, as if it came direct from heaven, bearing this testimony before all unequivocally and unshakingly, "I am the truth."

Lastly, (in illustration of this truth) Christ says, "I am the truth:" it is the power ultimately to subdue the world. Do we not need this? We have to contend not merely with the weakness of man's understanding, but with the strength of man's passion. Mighty forces are arrayed against us. How is the gospel to achieve its triumph? Brethren, that is an ancient saying, and it is a true one: "Great is the truth, and shall prevail." The thoughtful of all parties assent to that; the mistake is that men should so hastily conclude that the truth is with them. Even they who are engaged in the worst of enterprises wish to have the truth on their side, and labour to have it appear that it is so. However bad their motive, however bad their work, though their selfishness is as transparent as the light, and their guilt is clear as noonday, they use the sacred words of right and justice, and ever strive to make it appear that the truth at least is with them: for, in fact, man has a sense of fear when the truth is against him, and a sense of safety when truth is on his side. And why? Because truth is of God: it is the expression of the divine mind, the utterance of the heavenly oracle in the sanctuary of man's intelligence; there is no revocation or modification of that; the man who knowingly goes against it feels he is struggling with omnipotence. Truth is the only ultimate stay of the human soul; all else is a mockery and a wrong; all else degrades, corrupts, destroys. Truth is the fulness and fruition of its joy, the enthronement of its glory, the eternity of its glory. When men see error with their eyes open the spirit shrinks away from it as the body does shrink away in its instinct from death and the grave; for it is as the soul's annihilation to be misled, cheated, abased, corrupted, destroyed; and this is the end of the arch-fiend and man's great spiritual ruler. And, brethren, if Christ's doctrine be not true it must perish; all the learning, and power, and skill, and genius, of the universe cannot save it from the perdition it deserves; but if it be true—emphatically the truth, the eternal, the all-absorbing truth—then it cannot be defeated; it is of God, and will live on in the divine life, wield the divine omnipotence, reign on the divine throne, and that for ever. Christ cannot be defeated so long as this text is true, "I am the truth." Christ's people cannot be defeated so long as they can say, "We are in him that is true;" and this is the true God and the eternal life; living in him, depending upon him, guided and animated by him, the church is founded upon a rock, and the gates of hell cannot prevail against it.

II. Such then, brethren, is the position which the Saviour thus assumes before you this morning. Very briefly, allow me, in the second place, to attempt a more practical application of this subject to the circumstances in which we are placed. And I would address myself especially to those who are young in years; and yet more especially to those of them who feel that in reference to the highest matters that can engage the mind and affect the heart, they are all at sea, having nothing definite and certain upon which to rely, or, in utter indifference, seeking anything and everything rather than the truth which they are counselled to buy, but not to sell.

First of all, remember that though this truth is set before you, it will never

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be yours but in the exercise of deep humility. Suppose it were an inferior case. Imagine that you had denied the position which another maintained; further, that you had struggled long and ardently against it; further, that you had boasted of having rejected and refuted it; further, that you had identified your passions, your interests, your very honour with having rejected and refuted it; is it probable that without a mighty subjugation of your spirit you would ever recognize that position at all? Above all, suppose he against whom you have struggled is by the world unhonoured and undistinguished; suppose that against which you have struggled has been pronounced by the gay a melancholy thing, fit only for the poor, the afflicted, and the wretched; pronounced by the great a mean thing, fit only for mechanics and slaves; pronounced by the witty and the learned an absurd thing, fit only for unquestioning infancy and drivelling age; it would yet be, in that proportion, more difficult for your heart to submit to consider the claims of that position, and ultimately to acknowledge its domination and its glory. All that, perhaps, and even more than that, some in this assembly may have done in reference to the gospel. It is despised by many, has been rejected by the gay, the great, the learned; and your heart and life have been too much against it. Nothing but a humbling of your soul in holy penitence, nothing but a taking up of the position of a little child, can enable you to enter into its spirit, and thus become partakers of the kingdom of God.

Remember, in the second place, that fully to enter into this truth you must possess the spirit of him from whom it comes. Men mistake not only the nature of truth, but the only way by which it can be obtained. Men say we are proud in the truth. Brethren, nothing is more incompatible with Christian truth than the spirit of pride. If a man's mind and heart are in antagonism with the mind and heart of Christ, it is not to be conceived that the man will enter into the meaning and enjoy the sweetness of the truth which Jesus Christ of Nazareth has set before the world. Here it is not ample knowledge, nor keen logic, nor mighty genius, but the humble, holy, spiritual, trusting heart, that will give facility and guaranteed success. If a man is contradictory, and loves pardon and contradiction, he will never learn the truth as it is in Jesus. They wrote on Rousseau's grave, "the man of nature and of truth." Our own poet said more truly:

"His life was one long war with self-made foes."

And if a man loves himself more than the Saviour he will never learn the Saviour's doctrines. If a man is worldly and wicked, he will not make progress here; but if any man shall do his will, he shall "know the doctrine whether it be of God." Men believe what they desire; men understand what they love; they love that which they resemble. If we love Christ we shall understand him; if we resemble him we shall love him. Possess but his holiness—hatting all sin, and struggling against it; his spirituality—having heaven and eternity blazing before your eyes; his devoutness—ever feeding on the element of prayer; his generous benevolence—delighting to do good; every word will then have such meaning, every command such sweetness, every truth such blessedness, that you will understand well the position which Mary occupied, and the joy that overflowed her heart, when she sat at the Saviour's feet, and concerning her the assurance was uttered, "She hath chosen that good part which shall not be taken away from her."

Thirdly, let me beseech you to remember, above all, and through all your meditations on this matter, that this truth is divine in its origin, and intends to be saving in its result. You will never understand its nature, you will never appreciate its worth till you feel that. All other truth is important; this truth alone is saving: other truth may augment your knowledge, strengthen your understanding, refine your taste; this truth alone can save your souls, and nothing can compare with the salvation of your souls. All your desire, all your gain, all that for which you toil so hard, and plan so skilfully, is as nothing in comparison with the soul of your deathless spirit. You may garnish your person and your dwelling—you may treasure up your silver and your gold—

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you may build your houses and plant your fields,—pamper your appetites, with every sweet, and regale your senses with every pleasure; and the result will be the worm at the root of the sweet and wide-spreading gourd; and death shall spread over it at last the mantle of the grave. But when the soul is saved it is invested with a spotless righteousness, filled with ecstatic joy, made a companion with God and Christ for ever, where “there is no sickness, nor sorrow nor crying, nor death; for the former things have passed away.”

Fourthly, let me beseech you to take this with you—and it is the last exhortation I would press upon you—to take it with you as at once your defence and your law. Your defence; for the trial is before you. Young man! the trial is before you. Oh, that one could so far unveil the future as to show to the youthful the process through which God’s providence will conduct them, to humble them, to prove them, and to show to them and the world what is in their hearts. The trial is before you in the temptations by which you may be assailed, in the sorrows you may have to bear, in the errors you may have to confront, in all the mental conflicts through which you may have to pass. A harder trial than any life itself can bring—the conflict of death, when passion is hushed, and reason and conscience are supreme; when eternity looks in, and judgment is nigh; when everything that is false is hated for its wickedness, everything that is vain despised for its littleness. A severe trial still: “After death there comes the judgment.” “If we receive the witness of man, the witness of God is greater.” Though every one should applaud you now, there is an appeal from that applause to him who judged righteously; and nothing but truth before this throne with honour can appeal. Seek by faith, then, to be in Christ; live in his thoughts; breathe his spirit; imitate his conduct. It shall shield you everywhere, and shield you in the judgment, for he who is of the truth can never be confuted, and never will be ashamed. But you have this not as a luxury merely to enjoy, but as a deposit to keep; not as a blessing wherewith you are to be honoured, but as an instrument you are to use. If you have the truth keep it, proclaim it, love it, defend it. In every haunt of life show your reverence for it. When the blasphemers sneers, when the flippant tongue utters its flippant remark, when the habits of business would crush it, when the world’s follies would dissipate it, remember you have the truth, and that truth is the essence of Christ. Woe to that man who shall slight it, reject it, allow it to be frittered away! Error is abroad in every hand. Be, I beseech you, amongst those who are set for the defence of the gospel; and when the victorious one shall come, his truth victorious then—all tongues celebrating its praises, and all hearts in heaven filled with its grace and goodness—then, though amongst the meanest and humblest, yet being also amongst the truest friends and followers of him, you will share his glory, whose glory shall be without end, unspeakable, and divine. Amen.

The following Nos. of the Penny Pulpit contain Sermons delivered at Exeter Hall.

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WISDOM'S INVITATION.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY EVENING, MAY 18, 1851,

BY THE REV. GEORGE SMITH,

AT EXETER HALL.

"Wisdom hath builded her house; she hath hewn out her seven pillars: she hath killed her beasts; she hath mingled her wine; she hath also furnished her table. She hath sent forth her maidens: she crieth upon the highest places of the city, Whoso is simple let him turn in hither: as for him that wanteth understanding, she saith to him, Come, eat of my bread, and drink of the wine which I have mingled, Forsake the foolish, and live; and go in the way of understanding."—Proverbs ix. 1—6.

It cannot, I think, reasonably be doubted that the declaration uttered by the Apostle Peter, when speaking of the writings of his beloved brother Paul, in which he declares that there are some things "hard to be understood," is one that applies with equal truthfulness and power to a large portion of truth contained in the other parts of the sacred writings. True it is that the fundamental and elementary principles of Christianity are fully and clearly depicted before us in such simple and intelligible terms that the intellect of a little child may grasp them, and that the mind of the ignorant and uncultivated may comprehend them,—that they are written so plain that "he may run who readeth,"—that they are brought down to the lowest capacity, so that "a wayfaring man, though a fool, need not err therein." "I thank thee, O! Father, that thou hast hidden these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so, Father, for so it seemeth good in thy sight." But, while the fundamental and elementary principles of Christianity are few, and plain, and simple, and intelligible, there are many great, grand, overwhelming histories about the gospel which no infinite mind in the present world can fully comprehend, and which, in all probability, even the intellect of an angel cannot adequately and perfectly understand; for we are told that these things the angels desire to look into, and that in the redemption of the church they attempt to comprehend and understand the greatly diversified wisdom of God. The sources of the mystery and perplexity that gather round the book of life may be found at times in the very nature of the doctrines themselves. If you ask the question, "What is God?" if you ask about the harmony of the purposes of God with man's free volition; the very mystery of the question itself would overwhelm you; but if you ask a simple and intelligible question bearing reference to your salvation, the inspired oracle will reply, as with a thousand voices. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved. And very frequently the prevalence of mystery in the Bible is intended to do us great good,—teaching us to be humble, to be prayerful;—"If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not," and it shall be given him; and, amid the darkness and uncertainty that may gather around certain great and important facts of our redemption, we hear the voice of the Redeemer, saying, "What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter;" and we are prepared to reply, "Now we know in part, now we prophecy in part, but then we shall know even as we are known;" and the very darkness of earth may make the light of heaven more clear, and the very imperfection of our views in the present world may urge us to look forward to that world, where without any imperfection we shall thoroughly understand the mind and will of God, and be led into the rich

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and practical enjoyment of all truth and happiness and glory. But very frequently the difficulties of scripture arise from the vehicle in which the truth is communicated, from the peculiar forms of phraseology by which the truth is taught us. The oriental forms of thinking and modes of utterance were very different from our own. There is, for instance, about the prophecies of the Bible, very frequently a loftiness of figure, a poetry of thought, and boldness and brilliancy of imagination, that we feel great difficulty in reconciling with the literal facts as they have transpired. Then, very frequently there is a great deal of mystery around the utterances of the Bible from the fact, that they are put out in the parabolic form. The words of the wise and their dark sayings are thus brought before us. It was a beautiful sentiment of antiquity, that the world, the universe itself, is a great parable, and that it is only by continuing to study the one and the other that we are enabled to comprehend their principles and laws, and apprehend the beauty and harmony that pervade the whole. So the Bible is full of mystery, not merely in its doctrines to awaken our attention, but in the manner and in the language by which the truths of revelation are brought before us.

The difficulties of which I am now speaking appear to cluster around the passage I have read as the foundation of our present meditation. It has been supposed by some that, by the boldness of the oriental figure here employed, wisdom as an attribute, as a perfection, is personified,—that the wisdom developed in the Bible or manifested in the utterance of truth in the gospel is here represented. On the other hand it has been supposed by a great number of commentators and thoughtful Christians who have paid attention to the subject, that there is here a figurative representation of the incarnate wisdom of God—the word that was “made flesh and dwelt among us; whose glory was beheld by his people, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.” While our blessed Lord was the embodied manifestation of the love of God, and of the great power of God he was at the same time the wisdom of God, and all the glorious truths connected with man’s redemption were exemplified in his character, in his conduct and life: he “went about doing good;” he “spake with authority;” he pointed to the world of light, and he intimated the way in which we should arrive at it. And if we look at what is said in this book about wisdom and remember that there are personal properties attributed to it,—that personal actions are attributed to it, and personal feelings and affections, I think we shall have something like a justification of the view I mean to present to you to-night, that the Son of God is here represented. There are personal properties belonging to him: he is said to have been with God,—to have been brought up with God,—to have been possessed by God,—and before the foundations of the earth were laid, before the materialism and the mechanism of the universe were formed, was he with him, and daily rejoicing with him, and his delights were with the children of men. Then he is represented as performing certain acts,—as guiding, controlling, creating, beautifying, and adorning the universe; and these acts hardly appear to be compatible with the properties of a mere affection, of a mere abstract idea. And then the wisdom of God spoken of by this book in the chapter before us, is a wisdom that is represented as sympathizing with man, caring for man, loving man, diffusing abroad amongst men the benefits of harmony, and of purity, and of eternal life. “I, wisdom, dwell with prudence, and find out the knowledge of witty inventions.” And in harmony with this representation you have the language of the text; “Wisdom hath builded her house, she hath hewn out her seven pillars; she hath killed her beast, [or her killings, as we have it in the margin,] she hath mingled her wine; she hath also furnished her table: she hath sent forth her maidens,” uttering the invitation. “Come, eat of my bread, and drink of the wine which I have mingled.” But when you contemplate these representations in the light of that evangelical parable uttered by our blessed Lord in the chapter read to you at the commencement of our worship, you will feel that they both tend to the same point,—that there is the idea of provision made, the idea of an invitation having gone forth, and of that invitation having been pressed home upon the attention

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men ; that, when one class of people have rejected it and turned away from it, another and a more unlikely and a more unpromising class of people have been invited and compelled to come in, that the house of the Lord may be filled. Taking the passage, then, in this light, which I think is the true and proper light in which to contemplate it, I shall regard it as the representation of what Christ is doing, and what he has done in connection with the overtures of Divine mercy contained in the everlasting gospel. There is here, first of all, a statement of the provision made by heavenly wisdom for the wants of man ; here is a representation, secondly, of the kind of invitation that is communicated to men to partake of that provision ; and, in the third and last place, the invitation is enforced upon our attention, and commended to our acceptance, by many affecting and powerful considerations. May God help our meditations ; and may this endeavour to elucidate his truth and apply it to the conscience, and the heart be rendered mighty through God to the accomplishment of the end for which it is intended !

I. In directing your further attention to the beautiful figurative language that has thus been brought before you, I propose, first of all, to advert to the provision made by heavenly wisdom for the spiritual wants of man. The parallel of all this is found in the parable ; there is little modification ; the figure is somewhat different, but the moral is evidently the same ; they both point to one end. In the one case it is a certain man, a certain lord, a certain great king, who made a supper, and invited many ; but in the text before us it is wisdom—not a man, but a woman ; not a king, but a queen. She, as the embodied wisdom of Jehovah, is represented as having made provision for the wants and woes of man. And here you have the idea of a place of entertainment : "Wisdom hath builded her house." She has provided a place where the table shall be spread, the provision manifested, and all things be presented to the attention of the multitude. When the prophet Isaiah would describe the provision of the gospel he tells you that it is in a mountain, a place of elevation and attraction, a place high and lifted up. Here a similar idea may be presented to you ; for "his foundation is in the holy mountains." And when wisdom is here represented as having furnished her house, and built her dwelling, you have an idea, a correct conception of the church of God. That church is frequently brought before you under the idea of a temple, of a building, and of a house. "Every house is builded by some man ; but he that built all things is God." And God is the builder of the church ; the foundation has been laid by him in Zion ; that foundation is deep, and broad, and wide, and altogether sufficient for the purposes of human salvation. "The earth and all the inhabitants of it are dissolved ; I bear up the pillars of it," saith Jehovah. He who of old laid the foundations of the earth has in our times laid the foundation of Christian truth, and presented that truth to the attention of men. "Ye are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone." Men are represented as living stones, quickened and animated, hewn and fitted to occupy the position for which they are intended, cemented by Divine love, held in attraction to the foundation, and consequently held in relationship to each other. "All the building fitly framed together groweth unto a holy temple in the Lord"—"Even he shall build the temple of the Lord, and he shall bear the glory." And when we say that the church is the house of God, we do not mean the church of this or that party ; we do not mean the church of this or that denomination ; but we mean the entire church of God, purchased by the blood of Christ, regenerated and purified by the work of the Holy Spirit of God. Whether they be bond or free, whether they be rich or poor, whether they be found here or at the antipodes, they constitute a part of that church, animated by the Spirit, the church which the Saviour will eventually own as his blood-bought and redeemed people for ever. And wherever the gospel is preached, whether it be in the lofty, splendid cathedral, or in the humble meeting-house, whether it be on the mountain-top or by the way-side—wherever the truth is preached, and Christian people are brought together to observe the ordinances of God, it may be said, "wisdom hath builded her house," "Whose house are ye if ye hold fast

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the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end." Then when it is said that "wisdom hath builded her house," our attention is directed to the church above. The church militant and the church triumphant are but one. Heaven is frequently represented in the Bible, not merely as a state but as a place, where holy, happy beings live, where happy, holy beings are associated. And among the varied representations that are given of heaven there is the idea of a house, of a temple, of a building, and of a city. "my Father's house," said Christ, "are many mansions; I go to prepare a place for you." That heavenly world of which we are speaking is the temple of the great King, the abode of the living God, the place where all his sanctified and pardoned people meet and dwell for ever and for ever. There the exiles of earth, however far they have wandered, meet together as one family; there all the pilgrims who in every age have suffered great tribulation, having washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Redeemer, meet before the throne; there all who have sailed across the ocean of life under the guidance of the Captain of their salvation, meet safely and securely in a world of light and joy; there the patriarchs, the prophets, the apostles, the martyrs of later days, and the believers of coming times, shall finally meet and dwell for ever with the Lord. "Wisdom hath builded her house;" "house not made with hands eternal in the heavens." She has her palace of superlative light and of unparalleled glory; she has her habitation and her abode, not one portion of which will be permitted to fade, or to decay, or perish; she has a glorious city which hath foundations, whose builder, and whose maker is God. Lift up your eyes in contemplation to that bright and blessed world, and it will appear to you as "a city that is four square; and the length is as large as the breadth;" and the foundations of it are of a manner of precious stones; the gates of it are pearls; the streets of the city are pure gold; the river of the water of life runs through it; the leaves of the tree of life are for the healing of the nations; "and the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it," and the days of their mourning shall be ended. "Write, Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord. Why? They are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb; they go from earth to heaven; they go from time to eternity; they go from the church below to the church above. "The holy to the holiest leads." We may say of the church upon earth—

" Millions of souls in glory now
Were fed and feasted here,
And millions more, still on their way,
Around his board appear.

And all that belong to the true church of Christ upon earth will finally be admitted to their Father's house to dwell with their Redeemer in a world of light and glory; for the incarnate wisdom of God "hath builded her house."

Then you have in the language of the text not only the idea of a building but you have the idea of a building characterized by stability and durability: "She hath hewn out her seven pillars." You may be aware of the fact that in the Bible pillars are frequently employed as the emblems of strength, and of beauty, and of durability. The figure is sometimes applied to individual men—men of great eminence, men of great worth; hence we are told that Cephas, and James, and John, appeared to be pillars; "the pillar and ground of the truth" is connected with the doctrine of godliness; and you may remember the beautiful and instructive fact that will help to throw some light upon the meaning of the text, that when Solomon built that splendid temple on Mount Zion, that was the wonder, and attraction, and glory of the whole earth, he reared up in the portico two pillars; he called the name of the one Jachin, and the name of the other Boaz, indicating strength and durability. The number seven is indicative of perfection; it is a "perfect number." Every pillar, every buttress, every support that Christianity needs the wisdom of God hath provided. Has it a good foundation? That it is supported by ample truth, the evidence of the gospel, is clear and undoubted. It has been hated, it has been abhorred, it has been

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despised ; all the adroitness of criticism, all the boldness of conjecture, all the direct and malevolent attacks of infidelity have been brought to bear upon Christianity. But what is the result ? It has passed through the ordeal uninjured. It has been proved, not to be incompatible with science, but, on the contrary, to be in perfect harmony with it ; it has been proved, not to be inimical to the welfare of man, but always to be marching ahead of all the improvements of earth ; it has been proved to be divine by the miracles with which it is attested, the prophecies that are contained in it, the mild and benevolent morality that it teaches, its exquisite adaptation to the wants and to the woes of man. Though it has been hated, and persecuted, and abhorred—

"Like some tall cliff that lifts its reverent form,
Swell from the vale, and midway leaves the storm ;
Though round its breast the rolling clouds are spread,
Eternal sunshine settles on its head."

And as we contemplate the church we may say : "We have a strong city ; salvation will God appoint for her. Go round about our spiritual Zion ; mark well her bulwarks, consider her palaces, that ye may tell it to the generations following, this God is our God for ever and for ever ; he will be our guide, even unto death." The character of God, all the boundless perfections of our Father and King, the doctrines and perceptions of Christian truth, the promises and disclosures of the everlasting gospel, all constitute "the pillar and ground of the truth ;" and, believing the gospel, we know that we have not followed "a cunningly devised fable ;" building our faith upon the truth of Christianity we feel that we are building not upon the sand, but upon the rock ; not for time only, but for eternity ; not for earth only, but for heaven. "Wisdom hath builded her house ; she hath hewn out her seven pillars."

Then in looking at the text we have the idea of a gracious and adequate provision. "She hath killed her fatlings," or, "her killings," as we have it in the margin. And that is the idea given us in one of the beautiful parables of our Lord, about a certain king, who made a marriage supper for his son, and sent out his servants to say : "My oxen and my fatlings are killed, come, for all things are now ready." Here is the idea of provision. It is a house stately, magnificent, and glorious ; it is a building firm, durable, and imperishable ; it is fitted up with every convenience and with every comfort, with everything that is adapted to minister to the improvement and advantage of those who repair to it. Here is the idea of a sacrifice presented to you. "Without shedding of blood there can be no remission." Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us ; the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world, through the eternal Spirit offers himself without spot to God. The old idea of sacrifice was that of entering into a covenant engagement between two parties over the sacrificed victim, portions of the body of which were afterwards eaten by them. There was the idea of a feast upon the sacrifice. Does it strike you as at all unnatural ? Jesus says, "Marvel not at this : my flesh will I give for the life of the world ; he that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day." "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, ye have no life in you." Does any man philosophically object, as did the Jew of old, and say, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat ?" He will reply : "The flesh profiteth nothing ;" as if he had said : "If you could literally eat my flesh, and drink my blood, it would not redeem you ; the flesh profiteth nothing ; the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life ; they have a spiritual meaning, and they impart life to every one that findeth them. Come, eat of my bread ; eat O friends ; drink abundantly, O beloved !" The sacrifice of the Redeemer, then, is presented to you in the house of God. By that sacrifice you have approach to the Father ; through that atonement you may be pardoned and accepted in time and in eternity.

And while the idea of atonement is presented to you, the idea of what is grateful and refreshing is likewise presented. "She hath mingled her wine." You are aware that we are accustomed to mingle our wines with water in order to dilute them ; but the orientals, the people who dwelt in in Palestine, where the wine was not so strong as that which we drink in this country,

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were in the habit of mingling their wines, in order, by the power of spice to make them more attractive, to strengthen their flavour, to make them more valuable in the estimation of the people. "Give strong drink to him that is ready to perish, and wine to him that is of a sorrowful heart." Nor wisdom is saying, "Drink the wine that I have mingled;" "She hath killed her fatlings, she hath mingled her wine;" and the strong consolation of the gospel, the conviction of pardon, the hope of eternal life, the impression that we are forgiven and accepted of God in the beloved, shall put joy into our heart more than in the time when the oil and the wine of the wicked increased. Here, then, in the provision of the gospel is all that is adapted to gladden and exhilarate the minds and the hearts of men.

Then the table is furnished—"she hath also furnished her table." Divine truth in its simplest and most complicated form—divine truth that can quicken and keep alive the faith already imparted—divine truth that can guide, and purify, and train the spirit up for heaven—the truth that can make you free—the truth that can bless you with present happiness and eternal glory, is presented in the gospel.

Look, then, at the provision of infinite love, and you will find it adapted to your need. Light is not better fitted to the eye, friendship is not better fitted to the heart, the heart is not better fitted to the frame, the mountain air and the running stream are not better fitted to the physical condition of man's nature than the gospel is fitted to meet his guilty and wretched moral condition. "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters; and he that hath no money, come, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price."

"The happy gates of gospel grace,
Stand open night and day."

"Wisdom hath builded her house; she hath hewn out her seven pillars; She hath killed her killings; she hath furnished her table," and has issued her invitation, "Come eat of my bread, and drink of the wine that I have mingled."

II. I propose, in the second place, to allude to the invitation presented to mankind to accept of this provision. "She hath sent forth her maidens; she crieth upon the highest places of the city, Whoso is simple, let him turn in hither; as for him that wanteth understanding she saith to him, Come, eat of my bread, and drink of the wine which I have mingled. Forsake the foolish, and live; and go in the way of understanding."

The parties here employed to utter the invitation claim your attention. When the great man, the king, in the gospel parable is represented as making provision, he sends forth his men servants, to announce everywhere that "all things are ready;" but when wisdom as the queen of heaven is represented as having spread her table, she sends out her maidens. The figure, you will perceive, is delicate, beautiful, and appropriate: it is perfectly in harmony with the other parts of the representation. The same idea is conveyed as in the parables of the New Testament. Messengers are sent out who understand the nature of the provision; people who comprehend the will of the founder of the feast go out to utter the invitation. Though undoubtedly the figure might be pressed, and made to appear unseemly, yet we may keep it within proper bounds, and we shall find that it will give us a correct idea of the character of those messengers whom our Lord sent out to say that all things were ready. Here are maidens, the emblems of feebleness, the emblems of purity and of attractiveness; and this is just the character of those who were sent out by the Lord to announce that everything was ready. They were characterized by feebleness. "Not many noble, not many mighty," says Paul, "have called you." We have it in our version: "Not many noble, not many mighty are called;" but the other is the true rendering: "Not many noble, not many mighty *have called you* to partake of the gospel provision; "for God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the mighty, and things that are not to bring to naught things that are." We have the treasure in earthen vessels; and when our

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Lord announced to the world the provision he had made for human salvation, he did not send out the magistrates of the country, the judges of the land ; he did not assume the power of the Roman government ; he did not send out a number of officers ; but he sent out a college of apostles, a band of humble, faithful, and comparatively unlettered men. They went everywhere preaching the Word. They said : "We have the treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power might be of God, and not of man : not by might, nor by power, but by the Spirit of the Lord." And God has been pleased in all ages of the church to raise up humble, devoted, gifted, well qualified men to teach and preach the words of eternal life ; and still we find him carrying on his purpose by an instrumentality that baffles all human calculation : "The worm shall thresh the mountain ; the feeble shall be as the house of David, and the house of David as the house of God." And still we have our credentials signed with the declaration, "He that planteth is nothing, he that watereth is nothing ; God is all, and in all." Pray ye the Lord of the feast that he would raise up and send forth others well adapted to invite, and "to compel men to come in, that the house of the Lord my be filled." Not only is the idea of feebleuess, but the idea of purity, conveyed by the figure here employed. "I have espoused you to Christ," says the Apostle Paul, "as a chaste virgin." They that are with the Redeemer are "chosen, and faithful, and true ;" they "have not defiled themselves ;" they keep their garments white and unpolluted ; they walk as children of the light and children of the day. The Apostle Paul could say, "Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily and unblameably we behaved ourselves among you that believe." "We seek not yours, but you." The men who seek truth are the men to practise truth ; the men who preach truth are the men who uphold the power of truth ; the men who are instrumental in bringing others to the feast are the men who have known and tasted and felt that the Lord is gracious." "Ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord." "Be wise as serpents and harmless as doves." "Let not your good be evil spoken of." "Wisdom is justified of all her children." Then the idea of attractiveness is likewise conveyed to you in the character of the messengers. Can you conceive anything more beautiful and attractive than the queen of heaven sending out her emissaries, her maidens from her heavenly crystal palace of light and love ; going out with all their winning attractions, and in the name of the queen of heaven saying : "Come, eat of my bread, and drink of the cup which I have mingled ; forsake the foolish, and live." The prophet applies such a figure to the character of the ambassador of the gospel, when he says : "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace ; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation ; that saith unto Zion, thy God reigneth." And oh ! if Christ be preached, if his salvation be offered, and if the Spirit of God apply that truth to the consciences of those who hear it, and incline them to come in, we are prepared to give all the glory to him "who worketh all things according to the counsel of his own will ;" we place our crowns at the Redeemer's feet and say : "Now, thanks be unto God which always causeth us to triumph in Christ ; we preach Christ crucified ; to the Jew a stumbling-block, to the Greek foolishness, but to them that are called, both Jew and Greek, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God."

The persons to whom the invitation is directed are likewise indicated. They are here represented as being foolish, indiscreet, unwise, incompetent to guide their own affairs, incapable of obtaining that support and comfort which they need. Here you have a correct idea of the ruined, the guilty, and the helpless condition of man. He has forfeited the favour and friendship of God. When he came out of the hand of his maker his intellect was full of light, his heart was full of love, his life was full of obedience ; but he fell ; the crown of glory was torn from his dishonoured brow, the sceptre of dominion wrested from his enfeebled hand ; and he became guilty, corrupt, and helpless. You must admit that fact, or there is no meaning in the gospel. "The whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick." Christ "came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." There is salvation in

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none other but in him. You do not offer alms to a man who is "rich and increased in goods, and in need of nothing," but to the poor and needy you do not offer medicine to the man in perfect health, but to the man whose constitution is falling asunder, and whose life is drawing nigh unto the grave ; and the gospel is just adapted to the guilty and helpless condition of man. It finds you ignorant, and it offers you light and guidance it finds you troubled, and it offers you the calm and comforting support of divine promise ; it finds you wandering, and it brings you back, and leads you into the way everlasting. There is an exquisite adaptation in the gospel to the wants and to the woes of man. This indeed very frequently constitutes the great value of any invitation we have, of any tidings that we can give to our fellow-men. Just imagine to yourselves that yonder is a man sick, lying upon a couch and drawing nigh unto death : tell that man that there are jewels in the bowels of the earth, that there are pearls in the depths of the ocean, that there is silver in Peru, and gold in California ; what cares he for these things ? They are not adapted to his condition. But go and tell him that "there is balm in Gilead, and a physician there," and you carry to him a remedy for his want, a remedy for his disease ; and he hails you as a messenger of glad tidings—glad tidings of great joy. Thus the gospel is represented as preached to the ignorant, the guilty, and the wretched "Forsake the foolish, and live."

The scene of proclamation will once more for a few minutes claim your attention. "She hath sent forth her maidens ; she crieth upon the highest places of the city,"—in the chief places of congress, at the opening of the gate and the going in of the doors. This teaches us that the proclamation of the gospel is to be made in the midst of large multitudes of people. Our Lord thus preached it on the mount, on the highway, in the temple, in the midst of multitudes. He stood up and said, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." His apostles went out into all the world preaching the gospel to every creature. There have been times in the history of the church when men have not been ashamed to do this in the most public way. Luther, and the other great reformers of Germany roused the public mind to attention, by preaching in fairs, and in market-places, and in the midst of large concourses of people. Time was, when at our own St. Paul's, in the open air, men who held episcopal dignity and wore mitres upon their brows openly and faithfully preached the gospel. Time has been when Wesley and Whitfield went through the length and breadth of our country, preaching the unsearchable riches of Christ. Now wisdom is lifting up her voice ; you have heard the utterances of it to-night, not from the lips of man, but from the living oracle. And there is something affecting in the thought, that in this public place the gospel is to be preached ; there is something delightful in the idea, and yet something very solemn. Perhaps there is here to-night the largest congregation that can be found in any part of England at this hour ; perhaps the largest in any one building in the world, listening unto the voice of heaven, the voice of the Redeemer. "To you, Oh ! men, I call, and my voice is unto the sons of men."

III. Let me, in the third and last place, for a very few minutes direct your attention to the consideration by which this invitation is enforced and pressed home upon your attention. You will observe there is not the mere announcement of provision, not the mere proclamation of the fact, but an entreaty on the part of those who go out with the message. They appeal to the people just as Paul did, when he said, "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ ; and added, "We beseech you be ye reconciled to God by Jesus Christ." So here the invitation is enforced by an appeal to some powerful principles which influence the mind and affect the heart of man. There is an appeal to our love. "Forsake the foolish and live." Life is valuable,—all life is valuable ; vegetable life, animal life is valuable. Intellectual life is yet more valuable. The life of religion, the life of God in the soul of man, is the highest form of life. Would you live happy ? Would you live in life and live in death, and triumph over the power of the grave ? Then come and partake of this provision. "I am the resurrection and the life, saith the Lord ; he that

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believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live ; whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall not die." Believe in him and live ; live a life of faith upon the Son of God ; live a life of piety and devotedness to his will ; live a life of consecration to his glory ; live,—and yet not you, but Christ living within you. We have the prospect, if we partake of the provision of the gospel, of living with the Redeemer. It was the maxim of Epicurean philosophy, " Eat and drink, for to-morrow we die ;" it was the adage of that philosophy, " live while you live."

" Live while you live, the Epicure would say,
And seize the passing pleasures of the day.
Live while you live, the faithful preacher cries,
And give to God each moment as it flies.
Lord, in my view let both united be,
I live in pleasure whi'e I live to thee."

There is an appeal in our text to our love of enjoyment, " Eat of my bread, and drink of the wine which I have mingled." We are all panting for enjoyment, we are living for it, we are longing for it, we want it, and yet we cannot find it ; in the world, suitable, permanent, enjoyment is nowhere to be found ; no amount of earthly good, no modification of earthly enjoyment can render us truly happy. If you bedeck a man with gold, and adorn him with diamonds, if you could put him upon a throne, and place a sceptre in his hand, and a crown upon his head, still he would not be happy if he had no communion with God, no fellowship with heaven ; he must be purified in order that he may be happy ; the vile, corrupt principles of human nature must be regenerated, in order that he may be peaceful and calm and secure. The gospel offers you all that ; it invites you to enjoyment such as the world cannot give, and such as it cannot take away. If there be the consciousness of pardon—if you know and feel that you are reconciled to God—if you have the words of acquittal upon your lip, nay more, engraven upon your heart—if you have the hope of eternal life cheering and animating you as you pass through the present world, you cannot fail to be happy. As you love life, then, and as you love enjoyment, " Come, eat of the bread, and drink of the wine that wisdom hath mingled."

There is an appeal also to your love of wisdom. It is man's chief end to glorify God ; it is man's chief dignity to be intelligent, to be holy, to be walking according to the will of God. " I have understanding and I have strength. By me kings reign (says the celestial wisdom) and princes decree justice, even all the rulers of the earth." Would you be truly wise ? Listen to the gospel ; obey the word of God. Knowledge may be valuable, but wisdom is more important. Knowledge and wisdom, far from being one, have oftentimes no connection.

" Knowledge dwells
In heads replete with parts of other men ;
Wisdom with minds familiar with their own."

Oh ! to be wise unto salvation, to be wise in the sight of God, to have the hope of eternal life, and to accomplish the great end of your being, is to be truly, emphatically, wise.

I have thus endeavoured, my dear friends, to lay before you certain illustrations of the graphic and beautiful language of our text. " It represents the provision that God has made through the gospel for the wants of man ; it represents to you the kind of invitation that is presented to men to come and partake of it ; and it represents the powerful motive by which we should be urged to submit without delay. In closing this subject, permit me to ask you, have you obeyed the invitation ? There are many here to-night, doubtless, who have heard the gospel again and again,—who are not hearing it for the first time. You have been faithfully and affectionately invited to come in that the house of God may be filled ; yet, perhaps, you have not obeyed ; you have fed on ashes ; a deceived heart hath turned you aside ; and you are living without God and without hope in the world. Again you are invited—do not despise or neglect the invitation—do not treat it with con-

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tempt. If you have not hitherto obeyed, obey at once. "Come, for all things are ready." "The Spirit and the Bride say, come; and let him that heareth say, come; and let him that is athirst come; and whoso will, let him take the water of life freely." The men, according to the parable to which I have already referred, are represented as rejecting the overtures of mercy upon grounds of a peculiar kind. One said: "I have bought a piece of ground and I must needs go and look at it;" another, "I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them;" another had entered, into the interest relations of life, and could not come. All these things were lawful in themselves, but they became criminal, because they led to the neglect of an imperative command, and a gracious invitation. And this is the case with very many people: they are engaged in the world; the cares of life, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the trials of earth, or the joys of time prevent them from attending to religion. Oh! there is great danger lest the patience of the master should be exhausted, and he rise up, and stand at the door, and say, "Not one of these men that were bidden shall taste of my supper." There is great danger lest he should say to you finally: "I call but ye would not hearken; I stretched out my hand, but no man regarded me. I urge you, then, without delay to accept the invitation of redeeming love. I can just imagine that there are some here, especially the young, who think of accepting it a future time; "Now is the accepted time;" "All things are ready." The fatlings are killed, the wine is mingled, the bread is presented, the table is furnished, all things are ready. You are invited to come and to come now. Do not defer. I speak truthfully, I speak feelingly, when I say to you, do not defer, do not delay. Do not delay it till next Sabbath; you will not be better fitted then than you are now. Do not delay it a single day, a single hour; do not delay it till to-morrow: to-morrow you may have lost your reason, and be incapable of understanding it; to-morrow you may have lost your life, and be incapable of coming; to-morrow you may have lost your soul, and "what shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?"

"Be wise to-day; 'tis madness to defer." May the God of wisdom bless his word; and unto his name be all the praise and glory! Amen.

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The following Nos. of the Penny Pulpit contain Sermons delivered at Exeter Hall.

- 1,700, The Great Exhibition, by the Rev. T. Binney.
- 1,701, The Gift of God, by the Hon. and Rev. B. W. Noel, M.A.
- 1,705, The Prodigal's Return, by the Rev. W. Brock.
- 1,706, The City of Refuge, by the Rev. J. Beaumont, D.D.
- 1,710, The Truth, by the Rev. J. Aldis.

(To be continued.)

LOOKING TO CHRIST.

A Sermon

PREACHED ON SUNDAY MORNING, MAY 25, 1851,

BY THE REV. JAMES HAMILTON, D.D.

AT EXETER HALL.

"Look unto me, and be ye saved."—Isaiah xlvi. 22.

FROM an entire view of the context we might safely conjecture that this language is appropriated to the second person in the Godhead—to the Lord Jesus Christ. But we are not left to conjecture on the subject, for the language is thus applied in the New Testament. "Look unto the Lord Jesus, and be saved, all the ends of the earth," is in its interpretation, the purport of this passage. In the language of metaphor the mind has got an eye as well as the body. We say, "Look at this fact; look at this or that other historic personage; look at Luther; look at Julius Cæsar; look at Abraham;" and we all understand what is meant when such language is employed. It is in some such a way that we are told to look at the Saviour. We would all understand quite well what was intended, had we been told to look at him while he was yet amongst us; but now that he has passed away, and that the heavens have received him out of sight, the only way we can see him is by looking at that account of him which God has preserved to us in his word. And if the Holy Spirit should so fix our wayward attention with his eye-salve,—were he to brighten our hazy vision, even we, my friends, this day, and in this very place, might see what Jesus is, and might experience the benefit, the present blessedness of looking at him.

And, first of all, if you look unto the Lord Jesus you will see *God manifest*. Among learned men it is sometimes debated which science is the most important—which is the noblest, to the faculties the most expanding, and for life's purposes the most essential; but there is one science which, the moment it enters the field, makes all competitors vanish; they melt like stars merged in the sunshine. That science, I need not say, is the knowledge of God. Whether we regard the magnificence of the subject, that science is the most august; or whether we regard its relations to ourselves, that science is the most urgent. But where shall we study it? How shall we find out the Almighty to perfection, how shall we know the dispositions and the character of that Great Being with whom our destiny is linked far more intimately, and far more enduringly than with the dearest friend of our bosom—yea, than with the whole race of Adam? Where shall we find a clear and conclusive manifestation of the great *I am*,—a soul-contenting, mind-assuring specimen of the unseen Jehovah? Philosophy answers: In nature. You will see it in the lily which burst upon us yesterday, arrayed as Solomon never was; in that solar orb whose radiance, flying swiftly, has been travelling since the dawn of time, and which has only reached our planet now; in those laws which swing a world round its centre, and which link together two airy atoms. But the gospel replies: You will see him better still in Jesus Christ. Nature cannot solve my anxious problems; nature has no oracles for this weary, breaking heart of mine; chemistry cannot tell me whether my soul is immortal; nor, among all its prodigality of worlds, can

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astronomy point out that far off sphere where my disembodied spirit is to have its final home. The optician can tell the rate at which a sunbeam travels; but who shall tell the speed or the power of prayer? The meteorologist can tell how to disperse the lightning, or how to evade its swoop, and he can even indicate those regions where storm-clouds never gather, and thunder never rolls; but who shall whisper me the secret for dispersing clouds of wrath, or apprise me of that spot where guilt-vials never burst, and showers of vengeance never fall? To the soul seeking after God, the gospel says: "Look to Jesus; behold God manifest; study the Word made flesh; in him dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily; no man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him. In him, the express image of his person, the image of the Father, behold once your teacher and your task; for Jesus is the true theology; sit at the Saviour's feet, and listen to his words, for God is all that Jesus says; look into his countenance, for God is all which Jesus is." Do you want to know if God hears prayer? Then listen to Jesus as he says: "Ask, and it shall be given to you; whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you." Nay, look at Jesus—that is, look at God in Christ, actually answering prayer—"Go in peace, thy son liveth;" "According to thy faith, so be it unto thee;" "Go in peace, thy sins are forgiven thee!" Or do you want to know if God is holy? Then listen to the sermon on the mount; then look at the Lord Jesus as he moves through this polluting world,—holy, harmless, separate from sin. Nay, look to Jesus as he passes through the pestilent atmosphere of time, like that drop of balm which at Midsummer's-day, the fable tells, used to descend through our atmosphere, and heal the plague as it passed! Look to Jesus dispersing sin's miasma as he went along, and leaving moral health in the wake of his own sanctity! Do you want to know where the disembodied spirit goes when it leaves this cage of clay? Then listen to Jesus saying: "In my Father's house are many mansions; I go to prepare a place for you; I will come again to receive you to myself, that where I am there ye may be also." Look at the Lord Jesus, and say if his own and his Father's house will not be sufficient home for you! And so on in regard to each divine perfection. If you are really earnest after the loftiest and most momentous of all knowledge in order to learn it you must look to Jesus Christ. Of true theology his words are the grand epitome; and of God, as he really is, and so far as it concerns us to deal with him, his person is the bright embodiment, the living specimen. Look to Jesus, and know God.

But still more, and more expressly, if you look to Jesus, you will see not only God manifest, but *love incarnate*, divine love incarnate. You are aware that, according to the medium through which it shines, the same lamp can be made to give a radiance of a very different colour, a cheering or a gloomy light. Through the blue window of the lantern the same lamp darts a cold lurid beam, which through a clear or gold-tinted window sheds a bright and summer-like ray. The same fire which scorches like hot coals of juniper in one receptacle, will be made to shed nothing but a genial and reviving glow as it radiates from another. Now, in a sinful world like this,—though perhaps it may not have occurred to many here,—in a world of sinners could you not easily imagine a vindictive incarnation and manifestation of the blessed God, which would have brought into the midst of our sinfulness the consuming fire of his holiness, which, thus coming in contact with our combustible corruption, would have turned our earth into an early perdition. We could easily imagine an awful incarnation where the Divine attributes should have shone out upon us cold, lurid, or ghastly, just as they do appear when viewed through that smoked glass which guilt holds up when it tries to look at God. We might have imagined an impersonation of the Godhead, an incarnation where his vindictive attributes would have come down on errands of punishment, and on errands of severity into the midst of our sinfulness. But what was the actual fact? In the Son of God incarnate, in the Word as he visited the world, Oh! was there severity? Was there a ruthless, a sin-scaping, hot, burning sanctity? "The Word dwelt among us, full of grace and truth;" a mild and benignant manifesta-

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tion veiled his glory, but veiled it in lowly kindness. On the occasion of that visit his feet did not glow like brass in the furnace; but the spikenard and tears of the penitent trickled welcome over them, and long lingered on them. His eyes did not flame like fire; but the gush of emotion would fill them, and Jesus would weep. His voice did not sound like many waters, but it floated calm and zephyr-like on the hills of Galilee when it told how blessed are the meek, the mourners, and the merciful. Always so accessible, so gracious and mild; the sinful man, the poor fisher could lay his head on his bosom, though a shekinah slumbered within, and little suspected the glory there. God incarnate is the God of grace, and this is the message which the Son of God, sojourning, brought, and which, ascending, he left: God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. Look to Jesus, and you will see that God is love. And oh! my dear friends, I would to God that we could do both these things—that we could look at Jesus in God's own light, and then look at all truth in the light of Jesus; that is, that we could see Jesus as he is, and then see all other things as Jesus sees them and shows them. How few see Jesus as he is! One views him through a sacerdotal mist, just as old Israel sometimes got a glimpse of the priest's misty outline through the rolling incense-fumes; and to them the Lord Jesus Christ is a shadow, an abstraction, and their souls are really resting on a sacramental Saviour—a ritual Redeemer. Another views him through the purple light of poetic sentiment; in the depths of distant time he sees a sublime beneficence, an impersonation hovering betwixt heaven and earth, and from his God-like hand dispensing benefits on an age long gone by. Whilst another, through the cold, splashy light of his jejune materialism sees nothing but the pattern of man, the son of Mary, the benevolent Nazarene. But over and against all this God reveals him, and holds him forth for us to look at, as at once truly divine, and truly human, his own co-equal Son, and yet our fellow-feeling friend, our flesh-clothed kinsman and our brother; as closely linked to this present age and to our ends of the earth, as he was to Palestine and to the era of the Advent, and as ready to bless you and me with each largess of mercy as he was to bless Peter and Mary and John. Whilst in the pure calm light of the gospel narrative we see Jesus thus benign amidst his sanctity, thus endearing amidst his majesty; it is in the light of Jesus again that we should study the doctrine of God's word, and in the Saviour's dispositions; reading the Bible page in that soft, halo-like lustre, that emanating love, that divine benignity which shines from the face of Jesus. When this is done,—when you take the Bible for the lesson-book, and Jesus for the heavenly lamp by which to read it, oh! how dogmas brighten into truth, oh! how scholastic definitions quicken into living and kindly verities. We speak of effectual calling; and Jesus speaks of it too, but he opens his arms, and, looking at this congregation, says: "Come unto me, all ye here present, that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest;" that is his effectual call. We dispute about preservation and perseverance; Jesus looks at his little flock, and says: "To my sheep I give eternal life; neither shall any pluck them out of my hand." We argue about the extent of the remedy; but Jesus in words so tender, says: "To my sheep I give eternal life; and whosoever will, let him come to me and drink." The self-same truths which in our logical handling have been often twisted into fetters, or sharpened into galling swords, were friendly palisades, they were nails clenched in sure places as they left the hand of the great "master of assemblies." In his own moroseness, in the sullenness of his spirit, man says: "Salvation is rare; and therefore I shall relinquish all effort:" Jesus says: "Salvation is rare; therefore relinquish your indolence; the gate is narrow, but the goal is worth reaching. Salvation is rare; the gate is narrow; but strive to enter in." In his ungodliness, man says: "Unless God's sovereignty select me, all my study, and all my talent will not find out the gospel." On that same sovereignty Jesus fixes his eye, and says: "I thank thee, O Father, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes;" with a rejoicing spirit he adores that attribute which sullen pride resents. And so all through the range of truth revealed, if we would look upon it complacently we must look at it from the

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Saviour himself as the standing point, and in the light of his propitious and joy-diffusing presence it would be surprising—we should wonder to see how many of our own chimeras melt, how the same doctrines remain, but how the shadows that encompass them flee away.

I have said that the Lord Jesus is God incarnate, and more especially that he is the Divine beneficence incarnate; and the conclusion from this that we drew was that what is so much needed for oneness in theology, what is mainly required to produce concord and unity in our creed, is to learn to look at things from the heart of Jesus. It is not more of dogmatic precision, it is not more of verbal accuracy that is desiderated, so much as more of the mind of the master. If we would learn to look at things from the Saviour himself as the standing point, we should be surprised to see how our oppositions are reconciled, and how those doctrines that man in his moroseness has been taking by the wrong handle and making them hindrances to his happiness in believing—how these, viewed with the loving eye of the Saviour himself, would prove so many stakes and palisades enclosing the sheepfold, not to keep out the wandering sheep that want to get in, but to exclude the wolf that would seek to destroy. But I repeat that, looking unto the Lord Jesus, there is yet another sight with which the earnest sinner is regaled, and that is *righteous reconciliation*. Him who knew no sin God hath made to be sin for us, that we may be made the righteousness of God in him. Now this is the very climax of the gospel, the cope-stone of his wonderful mercies, and the basis of our comfort; a Redeemer who is also reconciled, a Saviour so satisfied that God's very righteousness is declared in the remission of the sinner's transgressions. The Son of God was the surety in his own body on the tree, and bare the sins of the guilty, and in that burden he bare them away. He offered a sacrifice so infinitely acceptable that no other offering, no further supplementary sacrifice on the part of the sinner, nay, nor on the part of the Saviour himself, shall ever be required. By that one offering he hath ended transgression, and he hath for ever saved them that are sanctified. And now the gospel is just offered to each one of us. Do we accept it? Whenever God set forth his Son as a propitiation for sin, and whenever the sinner puts forward as his plea that Christ hath died, the controversy concerning sin is ended, and God sees no iniquity in the now humble and believing transgressor. This is the atonement, the *at-one-ment*; God pacified toward the sinner, and the sinner reconciled to the Saviour by the peace-speaking cross; or, as the Hebrew word means, "sin is covered;" and under the broad shelter of redeeming righteousness the sinner takes his refuge, and from under its wrath-proof canopy, he looks up secure,—looks up to a holy God; whilst from his judgment throne a holy God looking down beholds not so much that sinner as his own beloved Son, his surety, and sees him in his anointing; and the sinner shares that smile which greets his surety. Looking unto Jesus God had been willing to save that sinner long ago; now that the sinner also looks to Jesus, he is saved actually and for ever.

I have said that whosoever looks to the Lord Jesus sees in him God manifest, the Divine love embodied, a righteous reconciliation; and I would now add, fourthly, that whosoever looks at him long enough, simply enough, intently enough, will find in him *transfused immortality*, will find life transmitted from that Saviour unto his own soul. The moment that God's injunction is obeyed—the moment that the sinner casts himself on Christ for salvation, that moment the sinner is safe, but it may be a long while before he can realize his safety, long before he is finally assured of his salvation—a long time before the blessings of the gospel which are actually his, are also his in conscious possession. There is a mariner who has ploughed the main in search of a far-off and fertile country: now he nears it, and now he disembarks upon it; but its shore is flat and tame, revealing nothing wonderful; and it is not until he penetrates the interior that he alights on the palm forests, and golden sands, and diamond mines, which make it "the goodliest of all lands." Still, it is land: it is not the treacherous deep; it is a land of promise—that land which contains all that is needful to make him rich and resplendent, so soon as he has sufficiently ransacked it, and made its abundance his own. And so with the gospel: some

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happy voyagers sail at once into the very heart of its Eden, whilst others drop their disconsolate anchor on a tame and a doubtful shore, and their first landing is in mist, and amid the ocean's mournful music; and it is not until they have performed weary marchings and counter-marchings through the waste and howling wilderness that streams of milk and honey at last regale their senses, and assure them that it is the land of promise. So a man may be in the covenant a long time before he gets into its comfort; he may be in Christ a long time before he can rejoice in Christ, before he is sensibly blessed with all spiritual blessings in Christ. Or to take an analogy more akin to our text, "Look unto me, and be ye saved." When the bitten Israelite obeyed God's command, and gazed at the serpent of brass, he lived; in that very look, the virus of death was miraculously countervailed, and his recovery began. But just as you can easily imagine the anguish so intense that one moment could not charm it into ease and ecstasy—nay, the smart so keen that the stings which had been received would mingle for a time with the throbs of convalescence, and in half slumbrous moments the patient might dream that he was still death-doomed; so when you reflect what a malignant malady is sin, how deep it has dug its fangs into our inmost nature, and how long we have been tossing in its consuming torture, though a look to the Son of God uplifted is salvation, though the first believing look is everlasting life begun, you can scarcely wonder that the surviving smart or the returning twinges of the old death stroke sometimes sterile the believer, and make him quail if he can be really recovered, or make him dread a fatal relapse. But what would you have advised the man in such a case to do? To look again, look constantly, look eagerly; look till every qualm of doubt, till every fear of death is drowned in the tide of transmitted life and radiated salubrity. And you who still feel the discomfort of the old disease—you who fear lest the ancient wound should fester afresh, and kill your soul at last—you who doubt if a cure, if salvation can be really yours—look again, look steadfastly, and look solely unto Jesus Christ. In him is life, and that light is put there by God as the light of men. Like the old miraculous cure, where, through the gazing eye, health flowed into the poisoned blood, and passed into the twinging nerves; so through the eye that fixes on the cross, through the eye that fixes on the Lord Jesus, trustfully and lovingly, and as set forth by God—God's beloved Son, and the sinner's propitiation—through the eye that fixes on the cross renovation flows into the corrupt nature, and comfort into the wounded spirit, till by and by visible recovery mantles on the cheerful countenance, bounds in the obedient step, and swells out in the Psalm of thanksgiving: "Bless the Lord, who hath healed all my diseases, who restoreth my soul, and who, far as the east is from the west, so far hath removed my transgressions from me." "Look unto me, and be ye saved." Look until your salvation be sensible; look until in your own recovered soul you are conscious of a cure.

To which I have only to add, fifthly and finally, that if you look to Jesus simply as God reveals him in his word, and as he is in himself, you will see a *love-attracting* and a *life-assimilating Saviour*; you will see a Saviour who, when he attracts your love, will assimilate your life to his. If you look to a right purpose, and long enough, and simply enough, you will not only get sensible, but visible salvation; that is, you yourself will look like one who has looked to Jesus. There are some sights very striking, and the mind that has once seen them never can forget them. Nobody forgets Niagara. Fifty years may pass, but still at the very name a sense of the superhuman rises; and through mists of dotard memory the man will still perceive a shape of terror—the whirling clouds, the liquid thunder, the mountain mass of waters eternally down plunging, which made the soil totter, and his hair stand on end, so long ago. Nobody forgets an Alpine setting sun—the lofty peaks, and glory-tinted pinnacles, on which it seemed as if none but angel feet should stand—fit pedestal for the sapphire throne. And there are sights of beauty which it is easy to remember: a rainbow made by moonbeams; a cereus flowering in the night; a green island sleeping out in a silver lake. And as there are sights of power, and splendour, and loveliness, so there are spectacles of moral pathos which

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leave their impress sharp and deep on memory's finest tablet. If you ever saw the last look of parental love, or the joy of affection in some sweet surprise, or the flush sublime of holy heroism in some crisis of self-conquest, sights like these engrave themselves in memory's clearest surface, and the spirit which they ennable can never rust again. But whilst the word was still manifest—whilst God in Christ still sojourned in the world, the elements of power and majesty, and loveliness, and tenderness, and, above all, of superhuman sanctity, were seen in all the daily occurrences of his life; and where there was a spirit susceptible the result was very palpable. Take, for instance, the most appreciating and receptive among the twelve apostles. When Jesus performed his prodigies of omnipotent mercy, giving sight to the blind, speech to the dumb, and life to the dead, John was usually present, and shared the wonders and the thankfulness. When Jesus spake his word celestial, and there floated around him the music of the spheres and the fragrance of earth's flowers, John was glad to surrender to a sacredness which he could not comprehend, and was sure that his master was greater than he knew. And when, at last, from arid cermements the Rose of Sharon burst, and the tender plant lit up with celestial radiance the top of Tabor, John was content to bask in silent adoration amid the light of felt divinity, and to steep his soul in the wondrous fellowship of the Father and the Son. And even when he fought that strange battle in the storm; when to Gethsemane all the hosts of darkness had come up, and on Gethsemane the wrath of justice was come down; when, red in his apparel and all alone, he trod that awful wine-press, and like the arch which moonbeam light when the orb of day is absent, angels sped through the gloom to tell the Captain of salvation that all heaven was sympathizing still; and when from the crushed and beaten sod the Redeemer started up, and, in majesty of self-conquest, cried, "Father, not my will, then, but thine, be done;" that bewildered disciple felt it awful to be near such a wrath—ay, awful to be himself the object of such love. And when the Son of man was lifted up, when Jesus hung upon the cross, that beloved disciple heard his prayers for the world and his care for Mary; and he who in after days was to write down "the blood of Jesus cleaneth from all sin"—that disciple beheld, and bare particular record when the Saviour's side was pierced, and there forthwith flowed blood and water. And when the Saviour was ascending to heaven, that downward gaze which bespoke it a world that he had not done with yet, a world from which he was not finally sundered, a world where he was leaving friends very dear, but very frail and forlorn, a world where he had been this time a stranger and a sufferer, but where his next arrival would be different—that look of compassion and kind promise met the loving disciple's eye, the last thing ere the cloud closed on his master, and it fell around him from his master's outspread hands a blessing and a joy that abode with him for ever. And when like the sound of cataracts pouring in the visions of later life he recognized the voice once so familiar to him, and in the glowing eyes, the snowy hair, and the sun-bright countenance, could only recognize what he had seen upon Tabor, there was left in him no spirit for anything except to cry, "Even so, Lord Jesus, come quickly." But as the result of all these revelations—as the consequence of having been admitted to all these sights of humiliation, and grandeur, and tenderness, and power,—and, above all, as the consequence of a regenerate and receptive spirit mingling in all these scenes of sanctity, there was imbibed by his susceptible spirit a beauty and a holiness the like of which the world has seldom seen. Like the diamond, which they used to allege drank in the sunbeams by day, in order to dart them through the night; so looking to Jesus, to the sun of his spirit, John the divine so drank in the beams of Immanuel's grace, from Christ's benevolence and holiness and fellowship with God, that he shone in the dark when the sun was gone, and he became a two-fold historian of his Lord; for the one history men read in the Gospel of John, and another they read in the Apocalypse. And so, my dear friends, if we look to Christ Jesus, if we look to him lovingly, we too "shall be changed into the same image, from glory unto glory, by the Spirit of the Lord." There are many models of excellence; there are many now living whose lofty virtues may

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suggest lessons for our own, and there are many dead whose generous ardour and sedulous goodness it were well for the world if in others it lived again. But no human model can raise us up above mortality; and he would be a mere mannerist who closely copied from even the best human pattern; but here is the threefold pre-eminence of Christ Jesus, viewed as a pattern: the model is more than mortal—it is Divine; the closest copy will be the greatest original: and the example of Jesus carries with it a life influence, for, like a sun picture, it changes the prepared and loving soul; it changes it “into the same image;” and like John, if you look right and long enough, the looker will once more himself become a likeness. “Look unto me, and be thus saved all the ends of the earth.”

And just ere leaving this, there is one point that we cannot help casting out in completion of what was said in the outset: the knowledge of Christ the most excellent of all the sciences, and the sight of the Saviour the greatest of all sights. I suppose, indeed I know, we would not be far from the truth in stating that in the last week of May, 1751—in this same week a hundred years ago—George Whitfield was preaching in Moorfields, and John Wesley was preaching at the Foundry; and, all his sermons over, Philip Doddridge was about to embark for that fair land where the last of his hymns were written, and his spirit was breathed back into his Saviour’s keeping; Sir Joshua Reynolds was at Rome, drinking inspiration from the glories of Raphael; Richardson was writing then his once popular novels, and Dr. Johnson was publishing his Rambler; Lord Chatham was thundering in the senate, and Garrick was acting in Drury Lane. The sun of those mornings rose at the same hour at which it rose to-day, and set at the same hour at which it will set to-night; the lilacs and field-flowers of those days smelled as fresh and as sweet as do those of ours; and London streets were busy, and the whole city stirred; and the summer tumult of that time bespoke it a world that would not die. All felt as if all were deathless; the London of that hour never thought of the many Londons already underground; and each busy trader and each plodding merchant schemed and toiled as if the world were existing mainly for himself. Authors wrote, and artists painted, and preachers spoke, as if the hand that held the pen or the pallet could never moulder, and as if the tongue which poured forth its periodic music could never paralyze. Where are they now? That bulky form with which Bolt Court was once so familiar—whither has it gone? That glowing hand whose magic touch evoked such visions from the dull canvass, and created British art—where shall we grasp it now? And that angel face which wept and shone in alternate rapture and remonstrance amid the spell-bound outcasts of our great metropolis—where shall we catch a glimpse of it now? All are gone, vanished, disappeared; each in his own time feeling as if he was society’s all in all, the most important element in the existence of that time—nay, as if existence itself had its very life in him. Gone into another world—not gone into nonentity; for could we see them now, my friends, (and this is the thought I would bring home to you) we should find that the last few years have been far the most important, far the fullest of incident, and emotion, and feeling of all the years in their history. Although they were all great sight-seers in their time, they could each of them tell us now of sights which they have beheld alongside of which earth’s gayest pageants would look contemptible—alongside of which the earthquakes and conflagrations of our globe are not worthy

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to be named. When another hundred years are gone London will be still the same; another London will have risen on the scene, and new spectators will be coming to see new spectacles. It will not matter much by that time whether we have seen the curiosities, the novel inventions, and the brilliant spectacles of our passing hour; but it will matter infinitely whether we have seen soon enough that great sight which makes a dead soul live, and which makes a vile nature holy. By that time it will not matter much whether the great ones of the earth have conveyed us to some splendid mausoleum, or some broken-hearted widow been the only mourner at our funeral; it will not matter whether, like the grave of Moses, our resting place is a secret which Jehovah has in his own keeping, or whether some curious antiquary be still able to decypher the old epitaph in some suburban churchyard, if God has written over it, "that body is dead because of sin; but the spirit is alive with me because of righteousness." And it will not matter though our image has utterly evanished from the memories of men, though nobody can tell what life we led while yet on earth, if by that time all have looked to Jesus, and, having seen him as he is, are for ever satisfied with his own likeness! May the Lord bless his word. Amen.

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- The following Nos. of the Penny Pulpit contain Sermons delivered at Exeter Hall.
1,700, The Great Exhibition, by the Rev. T. Binney.
1,701, The Gift of God, by the Hon. and Rev. B. W. Noel, M.A.
1,705, The Prodigal's Return, by the Rev. W. Brock.
1,706, The City of Refuge, by the Rev. J. Beaumont, D.D.
1,710, The Truth, by the Rev. J. Aldis.
1,711, Wisdom's Invitation, by the Rev. G. Smith.
1,714, Why will ye die? by the Rev. J. Stoughton.

(To be continued.)

WHY WILL YE DIE?

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY EVENING, MAY 25, 1851,

BY THE REV. JOHN STOUGHTON,

(Of Kensington.)

AT EXETER HALL.

"Why will ye die?"—Ezekiel xviii. 31.

IMAGINE yourselves amidst Alpine scenery.—Yonder is a broad road which leads to the edge of a precipice—the precipice overhangs a deep dark gulf. Out of the broad road there is a path—a narrow path winding about among the rocks—difficult of ascent, but terminating in a region of Eden-like beauty. A band of travellers, thoughtless, and light-hearted are pressing along the highway, and nearing the edge of the abyss. There are barriers set up—there are beacons raised—there are warnings given—there are guides close by earnestly advising them to turn aside, and climb up the narrow footpath. But while a few are persuaded to do so, the multitude, in spite of all which is done to prevent it, press onwards and reach the edge, and fall over, one by one, into the yawning depth—and even their ruin does not suffice to warn their followers. The rest rush to the awful margin, and sink into that enormous grave! You say this is unparalleled folly. No, not unparalleled. Folly equal—nay, greater is commonly displayed by the children of men.

It prevailed in Ezekiel's days, and filled the prophet with amazement. The people were bent on their own destruction. They were suicides, braving eternal death. That it is not temporal destruction, which the man of God here refers to, is plain, I think, from the fact that he declares it should not be inflicted on them for their parents' sin, but their own,—that it should light on no righteous person—that it would be averted by repentance:—representations inapplicable to physical sufferings, and natural death: and according only with the spiritual and everlasting consequences of sin—with the death of the soul, not the body—death in the future world, not in this. Agreeably to this view the threat is directed to individuals, rather than the nation: "I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways saith the Lord God." Eternal death awaited the impenitent—hell from beneath was moved to meet them at their coming,—yet men pertinaciously

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held on in their evil ways. The prophet could make no impression on them. They were bent on ruin, followed their predecessors to the brink, and perished in spite of the pointed warning. Great numbers in our day are like the people in the prophet's days. That death which is the worst kind of death, many of you seem determined to die. Notwithstanding the expositions of the ministry, of the Bible, and of God, you will persevere in the ways of ruin—We would fain make an effort to stop you in your progress. May the Holy Spirit help us to do it, with equal faithfulness and love.

We would take our stand by the brink of the gulf into which so many have already sunk; we would hold out the torch of Scripture, and give you to see what lies beyond. It shall be our first attempt to describe—

I. *The nature of your ruin.*

The death of the body is not meant here. That is inevitable. Some time or other that must come to all, for “it is appointed unto all men once to die.” Natural death will be only the beginning of that most awful death to which our text alludes.

This death is not the extinction of existence. The body returns to the earth as it is was, the spirit to God who gave it, to be by him judged and doomed according to its character. The rich man whom our Lord describes in the parable, (and though a parable, it reveals the true state of things beyond the grave), did not cease to be, did not lose his consciousness, but only changed the condition of his being—“And in hell he lifted up his eyes being in torments.” Judas when he died, did not go out of existence,—but only out of this world—“he went to his own place.”

It is not the extinction of thought. Such thoughts as men have now they will cease to have in another world. Such objects as interest them here will lose their charms hereafter. Such occupations as at present engross their whole attention will there be eternally abandoned, but thoughts of some sort they will have—thoughts awakened by new objects, or by old objects seen under new aspects—thoughts awakened by the dreadful pains and penalties they endure. Thought is involved in the very idea of the soul's future existence, to suppose it would exist hereafter, and yet never think would be a perfect contradiction.

It is not the extinction of feeling, for that is interwoven—inextricably interwoven with thought. The mental and emotional are strangely intermingled. They run, and melt into each other, and we cannot tell where that ends and this begins. According to the character of the thoughts will be the feelings. If the former be appalling and terrific, the latter must ever roll through the depths of the lost spirit in floods of fear and agony.

It is not the extinction of conscience. Conscience is an essential, an immortal part of our nature, and becomes a source of pleasure or the opposite, according to the character of the being possessing it. It lives on memory: it is ever feeding on the past: it is ever drinking out of the wells of bygone times, the sweetest or the bitterest waters. If memory could die, then conscience would cease to torment, but memory will be as enduring as conscience. The remonstrance of sin must ever be a source of torture. It must be the minister of unutterable pain to a soul that is lost. It must pierce it like a scorpion, gnaw it through like a vulture, talk to it in thunder, bind it round and round with red hot chains! There is no peace saith my God to the wicked!

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What means then this impending death?

It is the death of pleasure—the end of all delight—the putting out of the last taper of enjoyment, so that nothing is left but deep dense darkness—the quenching of all those vain joys (the only joys the ungodly can ever know of) which are likened in scripture to the crackling of thorns under the pot.

It is the death of hope. We can discover no hints in scripture of the final restoration of the wicked; no gleam of sunshine, no star-light anywhere. As we read what the Bible teaches on the subject, it is like looking out of a window into thick black everlasting night. Indeed the very thought of hope is positively excluded by the declaration, “the worm dieth not—the fire is not quenched.” Everlasting punishment! It cannot mean that after a while the soul cleansed by penal fires shall recover its purity. It cannot mean that out of the depths of hell it shall mount up to heaven.

It is the death of love. So long as there is any love left, there is hope of the soul, however fallen. So long as the soul at all loves what is beautiful, pure, innocent, true, so long as it loves any being whom it clothes in virtuous excellence—there is a possibility of its being recovered. There is a spark of life left in it. Something remains that may be fanned into a flame; but when all love dies out of it, when the last glimmer of affection is gone, when nothing remains but enmity to God and man—then is the soul utterly reprobate, for ever dead—for ever damned. So will the soul of every lost one die, love will be turned into hatred. “Hateful and hating one another;” are words which will apply more emphatically to the future than the present state of sinners—that is the most tremendous condition to which creatures can be reduced. To that depth of wretchedness unsaved sinners will be hereafter reduced. A soul, without any sense or capacity of love, is one of the darkest ideals of a state of perdition which can be conceived.

It involves exclusion from heaven, from that world of which scripture gives us such bright and attractive visions: from “our father’s house;” from “the city of habitation;” from “the temple of God and the Lamb;” from “paradise;” from “the tree, and from the fountain of life;” from those regions were “there is no curse—neither shall there be any more pain.”

It involves exclusion from the society of the really great and good, God’s true nobility, “the innumerable company of angels;” the great cloud of witnesses; “the church of the first-born whose names are written in heaven;” “the spirits of the just made perfect;” “the glorious company of the apostles, the godly fellowship of the prophets, the noble army of martyrs.”

It involves exclusion from “the Father of an infinite Majesty;” “from his holy, true, and everlasting Son;” “the King of glory;” “also the Holy Ghost the Comforter;” “Depart from me.” That may awaken little terror in the minds of those who know not what God is; and what Christ is, and what the Holy Spirit is to all who are united to him! But only let them understand what infinite blessedness results from the favour of the Triune Jehovah—only let them see how transporting is their joy who have washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb; who are made the temple of the Holy Ghost, in whom the Father dwells; only let that come to pass, and then what tongue

can express the horror awakened by the sentence of eternal rejection uttered by him, who will be the Judge at the last day, in whom dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, who is the only source of happiness, peace, and security. "Depart from me."

We have spoken in negative terms—we have described an irreparable loss, a forfeiture never to be redeemed. It implies a sense of privation, of despair—a feeling of this kind, "yonder is heaven, the society of the blessed, and God, and Christ, and the Spirit, and love, and tranquillity, and joy, but all are lost." Yet this privation exhausts not the meaning of the awfully terrific terms, "*eternal death*," "*The worm*," "*the fire*," "*the prison*," "*the chains of darkness*," "*the smoke of the torment*," "*the lake of brimstone*," "*the wrath of God*," seem to point to positive inflictions of suffering from God's own hand. We know not exactly the signification of those inspired words—how far they are literal, how far symbolic—but they surely indicate, one would think, something over and beyond the mere loss of heaven!

To close this part of the subject—I know no passage of scripture so pregnant with terrific signification, so comprehensive and complete in the ideas it suggests of the future condition of the lost, as those words of Paul to the Hebrews: "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." *To fall*, not into the devil's hands, for sinners are in his hands now, they are led captives by him at his will; he deceives them and blinds them, and says, "*peace, peace*," while there is no peace. No, not to fall into his hands, but into God's hands, into the hands of your Maker, one who bears you no malice, but is full of love, yet withhold just, inflexibly just, and while he punishes, will do it with a soul full of tenderness; while he dooms you to die, will do it with tears. *To fall* into his hands, not as a friend, not in accordance with the invitation, "*lay hold on my strength, and make peace with me*," but as an enemy, to be left at his disposal as an inimical power, even as the Israelites fell into the hands of the Philistines, and into the hands of the Midianites. *To fall* into his hands, not by surrender, but capture; not to relent and throw yourselves on his mercy, as Jacob did, with reference to his brother Esau; as David did in reference to God, after his numbering the people, but to yield because you can hold out no longer, as Saul did in reference to the Sovereign Lord of heaven, when the cup of his iniquity was full—after your resistance, for God to assert his mastery; after you have had your way, for God to have his.—*To fall* into his hands, not unconsciously, but with the full conviction of his presence and character, to feel that nothing has kept you out of perdition all your life long, but the mere pleasure of God. To feel that you had been hanging by a thread, standing on a rotten plank, and that at last the thread is snapped, and the plank broken, and that you are in the hands of him who hateth sin. *Thus to fall* is of all fearful things the most fearful. It is awful enough to fall into fire, or flood, or volcano—worse to fall into the hands of oppressive, tyrannical, cruel hearted men—worse still to fall into the hand of the devil—but worst of all to fall guilty into the hands of God, and that—not because he is malignant, not because he is powerful,—but because it is so terrible to fall into the hands of insulted majesty, violated justice, abused mercy, and despised love.

It is time for us to enquire the cause to which the threatened death is to be ascribed.

II. *The author of your ruin.*

Does it proceed primarily and effectually from God's will, or from man's

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will? The latter beyond all doubt. The sinner destroys himself. He has only himself to blame. The form of expression used in the text implies it.

It follows from the character of God. From his justice. He is a God of truth and without iniquity just and right is he. Would this be true if the final destruction of the sinner depended not on himself, but was the result of an arbitrary and irresistible decree? if immortal souls were the helpless and hapless victims of an iron handed destiny? But God is merciful as well as just. So merciful that he spent four thousand years in revealing to mankind the method of salvation—so merciful that he gave his own Son to die upon the cross—so merciful that he has sent the Holy Spirit on a mission of love and comfort—and to suppose after this that any man's eternal destruction does not lie at his own door—but is the consequence of the divine will arbitrarily exercised is monstrous.

The fact of the sinner's self-destruction is apparent from—

The character of the gospel. Look at the objects which it reveals. Look at the babe of Bethlehem, and the man of sorrows, at him who wept over Jerusalem—at the agonized sufferer in the Garden—at the crucified one. Listen to his invitations. "Come unto me all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," "The Spirit and the bride say, Come; and let him that is athirst come, and whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely." To suppose in the face of all this, that a man is driven to perdition by an irreversible purpose, independent of his own will, is to reflect upon the gospel in a manner the most frightful. It is to cover words of sincerity and truth with the atrocious imputation of fraud and falsehood.

It appears from—

The character of man. There is a conscience in man. Conscience would have no meaning if man were not free, if his actions were not free, his determinations free, his thoughts free? Does not conscience imply that man is accountable, but how could he be accountable if not free? Does any one blame himself for a course of action in which he is not free? He may be grieved, vexed, mortified, on account of what has happened, but he has no remorse in any case except such as those in which he is perfectly free. Now future ruin is ever ascribed to sin. Death is not a misfortune but a penalty. It is the consequence of individual transgression; the result not of Adam's sin, but your own; the result not of the sins of your ancestry, but of your own sins. The chapter read at the commencement of the service proves this. The truth there so much insisted on is, that every man who perishes does so because of his own iniquity. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." "The wages of sin is death." In no other way could it come to pass. If then sin comes out of human freedom, so does death. The consequences of sin must be traced up to the same source as sin itself. If you plant the tree you are responsible for the fruit it bears. The sinner's self-destruction is proved by—

The character of his future condition. That condition will be a condition of punishment. What does punishment imply? *Guilt*. The righteous may be oppressed, afflicted, persecuted, but they cannot be punished; only the guilty can be punished. That which God calls punishment, which the Bible calls punishment must come as the fruit of sin, the offspring of guilt. Therefore the sinner must incur it himself. What does punishment produce? *Remorse*. Good men may feel sorrow and pain, on account of evils they have incidentally and innocently occasioned to themselves, but they cannot have

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any remorse ; only the guilty know remorse. That feeling cannot grow in any breast but one that is covered with the soil of sin. Therefore the sinner if he perish, must incur his own perdition.

The fact is manifest. Not one of all the lost can say that a God of truth and justice and love, was the author of his destruction, any more than criminal in this country can say that the judge on the bench is the author of his ruin. The Divine Being solemnly clears his character in this matter. He will not allow the shadow of a suspicion to rest on himself. "As I live saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth ; but would rather that he should turn from his wickedness and live ; turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die, O house of Israel ?"

III. *The reason of your ruin.*

Temporal death is inevitable. It does not at all depend upon us whether we shall die in this world. It does, however, sometimes depend upon a person's will, that he dies so soon as he does. In the case of the martyr and the suicide, there is a sense in which death is voluntary. For it reason may be assigned : Martyrs, Why will ye die ? The patriot would answer, because I love my country more than my life ; the Christian confessor would answer, because I love Jesus more than life. They have a love which man's waters will not quench, which triumphs over the scaffold and the stake.

Suicides, Why will ye die ? Because you fear shame more than the rope, poverty more than the pistol, blighted and hopeless affection more than the river ; rather you fear these more than the displeasure of God, the sentence of the last day, and the torments of perdition. Martyrs are victims of love pure, noble, disinterested love ; you of fear, base-born, craven, disgraceful fear. Theirs is heroic bravery ; yours, mean cowardice. They are wise, for how little do they lose ! Ye are foolish, for how little do ye escape, and what a new world of misery do ye bring upon yourselves.

We turn from such to those of you, my hearers, who are pursuing the course which must end in death, and have I not before me some who also are victims of fear ? You are afraid of displeasing your friends, afraid of the world's reproach—afraid of a little ridicule—afraid of self-denial—afraid of putting away your sins—afraid of saying to the world, "I am a Christian. Detestable cowardice, unworthy of one who has a soul."

But most of you in reply to the question of the text—Why will ye die ? would have to say—Because we love the pleasures of the world more than the joys of eternal life ; because we desire the approbation of men more than the honour that cometh from God ; because we covet the possession of earth more than the inheritance of heaven ; because we are addicted to the ways of sin and are not disposed to break off our evil habits ; because we have been living in impenitence and unbelief, and have no mind to change our course. This would be your answer—Thus you destroy yourselves for the sake of the world, for the sake of sin. You are not martyrs, you have not their heroism. They fight their spiritual foes, and in death overcome them ; but you are the willing slaves of those foes, and arm them with weapons whereby you perish. You are not martyrs, you have not their wise heartedness. They only barter away a few years of strife and sorrow for an immortality of peace and glory ; you lose everything and gain nothing.

The guilt, folly, shame and ignominy of the suicide belong to you. To destroy one-self is considered so monstrous an act, that the man who commits it

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is generally pronounced insane. When not insane, when the case is brought in *jelo de se*, the miserable mortal is treated even in death as an outlaw, and his remains are cast forth with every circumstance of dishonour and disgrace, as no longer within the pale of humanity. In the great inquest of the last day, the finally impenitent will come under a verdict of *wilful insanity*; will be regarded as having acted the part of the madman, with all the culpability of the voluntary self-assassin, and will therefore be cast beyond the bounds of the holy city, flung into the pit of Ghenna, to mingle with the refuse of the universe.

Why will ye die? How strange that men possessed naturally of self-love should be open to the question! Sometime ago a foreigner flung himself from the Duke of York's Column. The jury recommended that rails should be put up to prevent the re-occurrence of such a catastrophe? What a marvellous thing it seems that it should be necessary to put up rails there to prevent people from flinging themselves down! Yet in the conduct of some of you may be seen what is just like it. You are bent on self-destruction, and with all our precautions, *all the rails that we can put up*, all the sermons that we can preach, all the Bibles that we can distribute, all the tracts that we can give away, we cannot prevent you casting yourselves into hell.

Why will ye die? Many can give no reason. There is no fixed passion or principle in you of any kind. Some rush headlong to the brink of ruin; some leap into the fiery flood with a kind of eagerness; but others idly, without purpose or aim, saunter beside the precipice and fall down into the gulf unawares!

May God in his infinite mercy give you his Holy Spirit to open your eyes, that you may see where you are, and what is before you!

Turn ye, turn ye. Turn from your wickedness. Turn to the Lord your God. Turn ye to the strong holds ye prisoners of hope. Repent, and be converted every one of you. Flee to the foot of the cross. Behold the Lamb of God. Seek the application to your conscience of that blood which speaketh better things than the blood of Abel. Repair to the throne of mercy, ask God to give you his Holy Spirit; lay your broken heart at his feet, and pray that he would cleanse, and bind up, and heal it, and you shall not die. No, you shall not die. "I am the resurrection and the life," saith the Redeemer, "he who believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live, and he that liveth and believeth in me shall never die."

But some of you will not believe. You will not believe what we have been telling you to-night. Let us illustrate your case. In one of the popular books of the present day there is a story told of "the Sunken Rock." A vessel, named the *Thetis*, was cruising in the Mediterranean, in search of a shoal or bank, or something of the kind, said to exist beneath the treacherous waters. The captain, after he had adopted all the means he thought necessary, having failed, abandoned the enterprize, declaring, "that the reported danger was all a dream." An officer on board formed a different judgment, went out by himself on an expedition afterwards, into the very same latitude and longitude, and there discovered a reef of rocks, which he reported at the Admiralty, and it was inserted in the Charts; the discoverer being rewarded with a high appointment. The intelligence came to the Captain's ears; he would not believe in the discovery: he was a shrewd, clever, practical man,

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but unscientific, incredulous, and obstinate. "The whole thing is a falsehood," he exclaimed; adding "if ever I have the keel of the *Thetis* under me in those waters again, if I don't carry her clean over where the Chart marks a rock, call me a liar, and no seaman." Two years after, he was conveying in the same vessel, the British Ambassador to Naples—one windy night—he and the Master, were examining the Chart, on deck, by the light of the lanthorn, when the latter pointed out the Sunken Rock on the Map. "What!" exclaimed the old seaman, "is this invention to meet me in the teeth again? No. I swore I would sail over that spot the first chance I had and I'll do it." He went down into the cabin, merrily related the story to the company, and said, within five minutes we shall have crossed the spot. There was a pause. Then, taking out his watch, said, "oh! the time is past we have gone over the wonderful reef." But presently a grating touch was felt on the ship's keel—then a sudden shock—a tremendous crash—the ship had foundered! Through great exertions, most of the crew were saved; but the captain would not survive his own mad temerity; and the last seen of him was his white figure, bare-headed, and in his shirt, from the dark hull of the *Thetis*, as the foam burst round her bows and stern. He perished a victim of disbelief. So perish multitudes.

God has laid down upon the map of his word a sunken rock. He warns you of hell, of perdition! But you will not believe. On you go, determined to brave the worst; and then, too late, you will have to find out what unbelieving souls you have been.

God of mercy, God of love, look down upon the people; show them their danger, and the way of deliverance. Oh! give them repentance unto life that they may be saved!

760

The following Nos. of the Penny Pulpit contain Sermons delivered at Exeter Hall.
1,700, The Great Exhibition, by the Rev. T. Binney.
1,701, The Gift of God, by the Hon. and Rev. B. W. Noel, M.A.
1,705, The Prodigal's Return, by the Rev. W. Brock.
1,706, The City of Refuge, by the Rev. J. Beaumont, M.D.
1,710, The Truth, by the Rev. J. Aldis.
1,711, Wisdom's Invitation, by the Rev. G. Smith.
1,713 Looking to Christ, by the Rev. J. Hamilton, D.D.

(To be continued.)

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A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JUNE 1, 1851,

BY THE REV. LUKE TYERMAN,

AT EXETER HALL.

"I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ."—Romans i. 16.

THERE is something peculiarly grand in the language of the text, especially when considered in connexion with the circumstances under which it was written. From the previous verses we learn that St. Paul was intending to visit Rome, which at that time was the metropolis of the world, and is said to have contained nearly seven millions of souls—or a population three times larger than that of London at the present day. Think of the number and magnificence of its temples! Think of its houses, embellished with precious stones; and its banqueting rooms, fretted with polished ivory! Think of its statues, columns, pillars, arches, porticos, baths, groves, lakes, shades, lawns, and avenues! Think of its sculptures, paintings, and libraries! Think of its Pantheon consecrated to all the gods and goddesses of the Pagan world,—encased with marble, roofed with silver, and fronted with burnished brass! Think of its Circus Maximus, capable of containing 260,000 spectators of its games! Think of its theatres, Colosseum, and catacombs! Think of its orators, poets, painters, statesmen, warriors, and philosophers! Think of its wickedness, luxury, sensuality, and obscene rites! Think of such things as these, and you will feel that Rome was at once great and bad, magnificent and vile. To such a city St. Paul wished to go; not as a distinguished scholar; not as a profound philosopher; not as the honoured ambassador of some earthly potentate; but as a preacher of the religion of Jesus Christ,—a religion at that time newly born; a religion frowned upon by sceptical philosophers as consummate foolishness; and which unprincipled libertines threatened to destroy as utterly opposed to their gods, vices, and bacchanalian revelries. The enterprise was great,—it was dangerous. For aught the apostle knew, it might involve the sacrifice of his liberty and life; but in the midst of this he stood unmoved; he was a sun whose shining progress was not to be impeded by threatening thunderstorms. Boldness—a divinely inspired boldness, nerved his heart; he rose superior to his trials, and exclaimed, "In as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also; for I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth—to the Jew first, and also to the Greek." He knew that the sceptical sophists of Rome would subject the gospel which he preached, like every other newly-arrived system of philosophy, to the strictest scrutiny; he knew that the supernatural pretensions of its author and that its advocates would be put to the severest test; but he also knew the divinity of its origin and the truthfulness of its facts; he had confidence in its purity, beneficence, and power; and hence he resolved to carry it to the very core of the earth's population, whence its vivifying pulsations might be felt to the utmost extremities of the human race. "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ." Our text is one of a numerous class of Scripture passages in which a negative word is used with an opposite positive signification; it means more than what it says. When St. Paul affirms that he is not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, he not only means that he is willing, barely willing to submit to an espousal of its principles and truths, but that these are the subjects of his glory; they are his chaplets of

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fame, his wreaths of honour ; they are twined around his heart ; they are his crown of rejoicing. In sense the text is exactly parallel to one which we find in the Epistle to the Galatians : "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ."

In dwelling upon the text, we propose to confine ourselves to the fact it states ; and in the first place to show some reasons why the apostle *might* (not ought to) have been ashamed of the gospel of Christ ; and then, on the other hand, adduce some reasons why he *was not* ashamed.

I. One reason why the apostle might have hesitated in embracing the religion of Jesus Christ, was the poverty of its author. There is a disposition in the human mind, especially in the minds of some men, to despise everything which has not its origin with the great and wise ; and, generally speaking, this feeling exists in proportion to the comparative dignity of the individuals concerned. A poor man will become the disciple of another, whom a richer man from the pride of his heart contemns. Now if there be any truth in this, it would have been in perfect accordance with the ordinary course of things if Saul of Tarsus had refused to become a Christian. We must bear in mind, in the first place, that St. Paul was not an ordinary man ; he was a man of mark—a sun in the human firmament, rather than a common star. Perhaps he was the only one of the twelve apostles who could make any pretensions to hereditary fame or to distinguished scholarship. He was a descendant of Abraham, belonged to the honoured tribe of Benjamin, was a native of the chief city of Cilicia, and a citizen of Rome ; Tarsus, his birth-place, being celebrated for its polite literature ; and Jerusalem, where he studied at the feet of Gamaliel, being equally famous for its religious rites. His soul was large and generous, his talents diversified and great, and his learning extensive and correct. On the other hand, we must bear in mind that the author of Christianity was poor, despised, rejected of men,—"a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief," born in a stable, cradled in an ass's crib. His youth was spent not at the feet of Gamaliel or at the Areopagus of Greece, but among the work tools of a labouring man, who toiled as a carpenter for his daily bread ; his manhood was a scene of constant persecution, poverty and pain ; he ultimately died on a felon's cross, an outcast of the Gentile world, and accounted a blasphemer among the Jews. Now, under such circumstances, I again affirm, it would not have been surprising if Saul of Tarsus had become an infidel, and had forestalled the sceptics of succeeding generations in giving utterance to blasphemy against Jesus Christ. His conversion was miraculous ; it was astonishing ; it was the work of God.

A second reason why the apostle might have hesitated in becoming a disciple of Jesus Christ, or in embracing the religion of the cross, was its want of external grandeur, and its decided opposition to all the religious systems then extant. Christianity, like its author, appeared among mankind robed in god-like simplicity. The cross was not hung with garments, nor embellished with precious stones ; it was only crimsoned with the blood of a crucified Nazarene. In the days of the apostle Paul, Christianity was without temples of any kind ; much more such golden-roofed, marble-columned, ivory-fretted ones as had been erected by pagan Greece and Rome. In the place of priests arrayed in sacerdotal and pontifical robes, its only advocates and propagators were a number of men whose previous life had been spent in collecting taxes and in catching fish ; its services were simple, and to the carnal taste were without attractiveness ; its revenues were reproach and pain. One of its great recommendations was its beautiful simplicity. But we must also bear in mind that Christianity from the first was antagonistic to all the religious systems then extant. It abrogated the splendid externalism of the Mosaic ritual ; it revoked the priesthood of Aaron ; it abolished the sacrifice of beasts ; it overturned altars which were crimsoned with atoning blood ; it maintained that Levitical types were converted into great realities. It waged war with all the gods and goddesses of the pagan world ; it denounced auguries, oracles, soothsayers, priests, mummeries, and mysteries ; it affirmed that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is none other God but one. It also attacked the wicked principles

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wrapped up in the heathen philosophy of Greece and Rome. It declared that God takes cognizance not only of outward acts, but of inward thoughts ; that we must render an account of our on-goings at the judgment seat of Christ ; and that every man must be rewarded or punished according to the evidence of his works. Such are some of the facts in connection with the origin of Christianity. I ask, Was Christianity adapted by its author to the views, tastes, and feelings of the populace ? Unquestionably no. Abstractedly considered, it was likely to be branded with the curses of the world, and, like an eccentric meteor, after having blazed awhile, to expire amid the proverbial darkness of the land of Galilee. Its converts, and especially such converts as Saul of Tarsus, were signs and wonders—trophies won by the almightyess of God ; though both Jews and Gentiles regarded them as insurrectionists and fools.

A third reason why St. Paul might have hesitated in embracing Christianity was the fact that it invariably entailed persecution upon its disciples and followers. Tribulation was the earthly inheritance of the first members of the Christian church. They were the laughing-stock of ungodly men,—the object of hell's fulminated wrath. Just take two instances illustrative of this. I select the first from the history of Nero. Nero,—one of the greatest monsters that ever appeared in the shape of man,—a basilisk whose looks were death—Nero,—whom Dr. Horneck designates “the devil's darling”—swayed the sceptre of imperial Rome in the days of the Apostle Paul. This man, whose name is a perpetual synomyme for the vilest villainy, reduced Rome to an immense cinder heap, that he might have the opportunity of accusing the innocent followers of Jesus Christ, who at that time were greatly increasing in the Roman capital. Though this execrable act was his, the simple-minded followers of Christ were seized as the incendiaries ; some of them were covered with wild beasts' skins, and in that shape were torn and destroyed by dogs ; some of them were crucified ; and others were burned alive. Yea, more ; to afford amusement to this wicked man, many of those innocent Christians were daubed with combustible materials, and dragged by night into the royal gardens, tied to stakes, and then set on fire that they might blaze as illuminating lamps, while Nero was pursuing his licentious games. Take another instance from the history of St. Paul. In 2 Cor. xi. he gives us an account of the sufferings which he himself had endured in the cause of Christ : “ Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one ; thrice was I beaten with rods ; once was I stoned ; thrice I suffered shipwreck ; a night and a day I have been in the deep ; in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren ; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches.” Now such were the sufferings which Christianity entailed upon its disciples and followers. Under such circumstances, I again affirm, it would not have been surprising if Saul of Tarsus had hesitated to espouse a system such as this.

Notwithstanding, however, the poverty of its author, the lowliness of its origin, its want of external pomp, its opposition to all the religious systems then extant, and the persecutions which it invariably entailed upon its followers, Saul of Tarsus did become a Christian. He renounced the religion of his fathers ; he did violence to his early prejudices ; he forsook the temple of Solomon, and bent at the foot of Christ's crimson cross ; exclaiming with confidence, gratitude, and joy, “ God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world is crucified to me and I unto the world.”

Before I proceed further, I would just observe, that the conversion of Saul of Tarsus, when rightly considered, is in itself a strong presumptive evidence that Christianity is true. Lord Lyttleton—himself originally a sceptic, and afterwards a distinguished advocate of Christianity—was the first who in an extensive sense used this important argument in his very able

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treatise upon this subject. His lordship establishes three important facts: first, St. Paul was not an impostor, or one who intended to deceive other people; secondly, he was not an enthusiast, or one who was likely to deceive himself; and, thirdly, he was not a fool, or one who was likely to be deceived by the frauds of his fellow-men. From these facts he deduces this conclusion—the only conclusion to which it seems possible to come; that the things related by St. Paul are, and must be, true; and therefore Christianity is of God. The argument is ingenious and valuable. I just mention it, that you, my friends, may be led to ponder it. It is eminently calculated to strengthen our confidence in the religion which we have espoused, to prepare us to rebut the temptations of the devil and the insinuations of sceptical philosophers. When we consider the character of the Apostle's mind, the confidence he had in his religious privileges, principles, and attainments, the prejudices he had in favour of Judaism, and against the religion of Jesus Christ, we are brought to the conclusion that of all the men in the world Saul of Tarsus was one of the most unlikely to become a follower of Jesus Christ. But he did become a follower of Christ; he spent his life in spreading Christian truths and principles, and ultimately died a martyr in the cause of Christ. If all this be true, I again affirm we have a strong presumptive evidence that Christianity is not a lie; that Christianity has come down from God.

II. This, however, brings us to the second part of the subject; the reasons why St. Paul was not ashamed of the gospel of Christ. And one reason is that which I have just been naming: a conviction that Christianity is of God. And what was the origin of this conviction? As I have already said, the conviction of St. Paul, in itself, when rightly considered, is a strong presumptive proof that Christianity is true; but then, of course, there must have been other evidences which convinced the Apostle Paul before his conversion had taken place. What are these evidences? I answer, Saul of Tarsus was convinced that the gospel of the blessed God was true, because he was convinced of the Messiahship of our blessed Lord. The phraseology of the text is worth observing, inasmuch as it brings before us the point now in hand: "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ." The apostle does not say, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Jesus," which was a common name among the Jewish people; but "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ; which is equivalent to his having said, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of the Messiah; of him of whom the prophets wrote; the Son of God, and the promised Saviour." If I be asked what are the proofs of our Lord's Messiahship, I answer, They are great, striking, diversified, and numerous. He enshrined his divinity, but his divinity was not wholly his; he tabernacled in a case of flesh, but, as in the case of the ancient tabernacle, the beams of the shekinah streamed through the chinks of his frail humanity so as to compel the surrounding spectators to exclaim: "We beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." Take his history, and then say whether Jesus of Nazareth be the promised Christ. Think, for example, of some of the events which were attendant upon his birth; such as the anthem sung by the angelic host, the irradiation of the plains of Bethlehem by the appearance of the long-lost shekinah,—the wandering but divinely-directed star; the homage of the eastern magi; and the adorations of aged Simeon! Remember that all the prophecies of the Old Testament in reference to the Messiah, were literally fulfilled in his life and character. Think of the voice from heaven at his baptism in the river Jordan! Look at the unrivalled wisdom with which he spoke! Think of the astounding miracles he wrought! Think of the glory which enwrapped his person on the mount of transfiguration in the presence of Peter, James, and John! Think of the purity and magnificence of his life! Think of the portentous occurrences which happened at his death; such as the supernatural eclipse of the sun, the shaking of the earth, and the spasmodic throes of the universe at large! Think of his resurrection from the dead! Think of his visible ascension to the right hand of the majesty on high! Think of such things as these; and you will feel that Jesus Christ of Nazareth is the Son of God

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and the Saviour of the world. Now, with such a mass of evidence, all of which had occurred within sixty years of his time, and was thoroughly attested by faithful and disinterested witnesses,—I say, with such a mass of evidence, Saul of Tarsus did not hesitate to renounce the religion of his fathers,—a religion which was as dear to his heart as that heart's ebbing blood,—and to become a devoted disciple of our blessed Lord and Saviour.

Shall St. Paul become our great exemplar? or is there one in this congregation disposed to spurn such evidence as this,—to prefer the blasphemous absurdities of Paine to the God-like gospel of Jesus Christ of Nazareth? Paine, one of the great oracles of low-lived infidels, has told us that the gospel is a lie. But, I ask, what importance is to be attached to the *ipse-dixit* of such a man as Paine—a man who commenced life as the son of a Norfolk Quaker; then was expelled from the Excise for smuggling; then left his wife in misery; then fled to London from his creditors; then escaped from justice to the coast of France; then was imprisoned for high crimes by Robespierre; then escaped the guillotine by a trifling accident; and finally fled to the shores of America, where he herded with the vilest of scots, was always drunk, and at last crawled into eternity in the veriest filth and wretchedness;—is there a man in this congregation disposed to prefer the *ipse-dixit* of such a man as Paine, to the noble testimony of such a man as the Apostle Paul? Perhaps there may be one within these walls who is disposed to say that he would at once embrace the gospel if the evidences of its truth were sufficient to satisfy his mind. May I be allowed to ask, without intending to offend, if you know what its evidences are? May I be allowed to say that, in thousands of cases, men reject the gospel without understanding what it is. David Hume, perhaps the most subtle, philosophic, and distinguished infidel that ever lived, ingenuously and honestly confessed that the New Testament, which he had endeavoured to lampoon, was a book which he had never read attentively in his life. If such was the case with Hume, it is not unfair to think that this may be the case with thousands more. One reason why men spurn the gospel of Jesus Christ is, because they never read it for themselves. We are bold enough to attribute their infidelity not to the dissatisfied state of their minds, but to the badness of their hearts. We doubt their sincerity. They are infidels because they do not like to live the life of a Christian. Their infidelity is not the child of a conviction produced in their minds by demonstrative argument, but an infernal something resembling that loathsome creature which John Milton represents as squatted and whispering in the ear of the mother of mankind, and which in the first instance is generated amid the darkness of a Godless heart. Find us a company of candid infidels sincerely in search of truth, and let them read the New Testament with unprejudiced, devout, and attentive minds; and, instead of impoverishing the dialect of devils, as Paine has done, to find terms to bespatter and stigmatize the prophets, apostles, and evangelists, they will thankfully recognize them as the amanuenses of Jesus Christ, and the unerring scribes of the Holy Ghost. Oh! I tremble to my heart's core for the insincere and hollow-hearted infidels of the nineteenth century! They are in danger of being damned, and with double damnation—with the double damnation of hypocrites as well as of unbelievers. Thank God, the truth of the gospel rests upon a rock—a rock which all the infidel cannonading of eighteen centuries has not been able to shake, shatter, or destroy. Sceptics in all ages have tried to burn the Word of Truth, but, like the bush of Moses, it has flourished unconsumed in the fire. They have thrown it into the crucible of a godless philosophy, and have endeavoured to fuse it into nothing but dross; but, despite the hotness of the furnace, and the skill of such daring alchymists, it has come forth a gem undissolved and undissolvable,—a gem shining with the image of the great Jehovah and reflecting the radiance of eternal truth. My friends, let me entreat you to take the evidence which convinced Saul of Tarsus; add to this the evidence which has accumulated since; join to the whole the experience of your hearts; and you will be prepared to sing, with confidence and joy, in the language of one of England's sacred bards:

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"Should all the forms that men devise
Assault my faith with treach'rous art;
I'll call them vanity and lies,
And bind the gospel to my heart."

A second reason why St. Paul was not ashamed of the gospel of Christ was its own superlative excellence. I am aware that this is not stated in the text, but it is implied. That it was one of the thoughts that existed and revolved in the apostle's mind is evident from a parallel text in the Epistle to Timothy, where he designates the gospel, not only the gospel of the blessed God, but "the glorious gospel of the blessed God." The field which now presents itself is immeasurably large and full of attractiveness, overgrown with the flowers of Paradise, and effulgent with the light of heaven. Here we have the rippling of Siloah's brook, pursuing its musical meandering amid fields redolent with the fragrance of Sharon's rose, and vocalised with the music of hallelujah songs. I should like to travel these regions, but the time forbids. I might advert to the doctrines of the gospel. These are worthy—I speak it with reverence—of the mind of God; they are pregnant with infinite momentousness; they may be understood by a little child, and yet they are sufficient to fill the grasp of a seraph's intellect. They are truths which from eternity have existed in the mind of the great Jehovah; they are a translation of God's thoughts and solemn purposes into the dialect of man. Merged into one grand constellation, they are the brightness of a benighted world. Without them the world would be a starless one. Genius might flash its coruscations, but its sparks would be profitless; Egypt, Greece, and Rome might summon from the shades of death their poets, statesmen, and philosophers, and these with their lighted torches might try to point out the pathway to eternal life, but alas! their brightest light would be but flickering, and, like the *ignis fatuus*, would only deceive and bewilder us. It is otherwise with the gospel of Jesus Christ. Compare its truths with the figments of Pagan mythology, and you are at once struck with the amazing difference. In the one you recognize the genius of man; in the other you recognize the intellect of God. I might advert to gospel promises. They are great, exceedingly great; and, being adapted to the necessities of man, they are also precious. They are large, and all of them are pearls; they offer blessings which have been purchased, not by gold, silver, diamonds, or gems, but by the blood of the filial God. They are not restricted to the inhabitants of a city, an island, a kingdom, or a continent; but belong to the inhabitants of the world. They are not restricted to the men of one generation, but they equally belong to the men of all generations, from the beginning to the end of time. Wherever we find undamned humanity we have the authority of the gospel of God our Saviour to offer pardon, and holiness, and heaven, without money and without price. The gospel is the trumpet of a Jubilee blown by him who sits upon the universe's throne, and the burthen of whose blast, reduced to the dialect of earth, is, "the Spirit and the bride say, Come; let him that heareth say, Come; and let him that is athirst come; and whosoever will, let him come, and take of the water of life freely." I might advert to gospel legislation. The gospel legislates for every one, and in its mighty sweep it embraces everything. It applies to the inner man as well as to the outer man. Its laws are few and extremely simple, but they are sufficient to guide us in all the circumstances of human life. If I be asked for their substance, I give it in the words of Jesus Christ, "Thou shall love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy mind, and with all thy strength. This is the first and great commandment; and the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."

If all this be true, I ask, are you prepared to allow such a gospel to be chained by designing priests, or to be burned by the hands of blaspheming infidels? Spurn the gospel, and what can supply its place? We have sometimes heard a great deal about the force and the fire of Homer, the father of epic bards; about the profundity and correctness of Aristotle, the philosophic Stagyrite; about the sweetness and mellifluous fluency of Plato, the bee of

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Attica ; about the ponderous and dazzling sublimity of our own immortal Milton, who used the wings of genius to veil his face as he worshipped at the footstool of the eternal throne. But, I ask, where is the Christian who is not prepared gladly to sacrifice all the poets and philosophers of the world rather than allow himself to be robbed of the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ ? Here we have the eloquence not of man, but of God : its words are full of electricity ; they are charged with the fire of heaven ; they are sparks of immortality. The gospel is God's intellectual image. Here human thoughts for the first time are made the vehicle of divine intelligence, and human words are made to express Jehovah's oracles. The gospel—what is it ? It is the breast-plate of our great High Priest, and all its truths, like the sacerdotal stones, glow with the effulgence of the mercy-seat. It is the Christian's shield, and is bright with the heraldry of heaven. It is a sun of God's own kindling ; a sun which has put out all the stars of the Jewish and Gentile worlds ; a sun in the presence of which all the lesser lights of previous dispensations are eclipsed ; a sun composed of the radiance that streams from the eternal throne ; a sun which will ultimately scatter every vestige of darkness among mankind, and wrap the earth in the light of heaven. It is the true Aurora, and eternity's bright morning star. We hear a great deal in the present day about the Crystal Palace, filled with the wonders of the world. The gospel is a Crystal Palace, reflecting the radiance of the universe's sun, and filled with the wonders of the wonder-working God—wonders to be viewed not only by bishops, priests, cardinals, and popes, but by the untold millions of mankind, one and all. Who would not love the gospel of Jesus Christ ? Let me entreat you to take it to your hearts. Read it, prize it ; love it ; hug it ; keep it ; defend it ; spread it ; use it ! Without it you are without chart, compass, map, or polar star : you will be dashed against the rocks of eternity ; you are sure to become a wretch ; while the shattered fragments of your frail humanity will be swallowed up in the awful whirlpool of everlasting death. But with the gospel for your guide, you will make the blessed shore—

" Where all the ship's company meet,
That sailed with the Saviour beneath,
And with shoutings each other will greet,
And triumph o'er sorrow and death."

The third reason I only just name ; it is supplied by the latter part of the verse from which I have read the text, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ ; for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth ; to the Jew first and also to the Greek." Here there are three important points upon which you must enlarge at your leisure. In the first place, we have the potency of gospel truth—"it is the power of God ;" of course not the power of God, abstractedly considered, but a great system of truth with the promulgation of which God has pledged himself to connect his Almighty energy, and make it the means of renovating mankind. To use Old Testament phraseology, it is the Saviour's "rod of strength;" it is the sceptre of the universe's king ; it is instinct with the energy of God ; it bears the *imprimatur* of the great Jehovah. The gospel comes not in word only, but in power and in much assurance. And it is for this reason, allow me to observe, that the gospel still exists. Had it not been for this, the machinations of hell and the stratagems of earth would have destroyed its life long ere now. The present existence of Christianity in the world, after the opposition and persecutions of eighteen hundred years, is a miracle which can only be accounted for by the facts stated in our text. This is also the reason why the gospel has been so victorious. The oracles of Delphos listened to its voice, and strange, and yet not strange to say, they have been silenced ever since. It has already entirely exploded Druidism, Scandinavianism, and other systems of gigantic error, and will finally bring down the great temple of pagan idolatry amid the shouting of the church in heaven and the church on earth, "Babylon the great, the mother of harlots, is fallen, is fallen, to rise no more at all." Then, in the next place, we have the mercifulness of the gospel—"it is the power of God to salvation," the great instrumentality which God employs in saving souls. The doctrine of the text is this—that the gospel always makes bad things better ;

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it is the magnetic star—not only a star which sheds radiance, but a star which sheds influence ; it draws man out of the horrible pit of sin, and lifts him to the throne of God in heaven. In its presence vice diminishes, barbarism becomes extinct, and human happiness is increased. Compare the influence exercised by gospel truth with the influence which was exerted by paganism in Egypt, Greece and Rome. Compare the influence exercised by Christianity with the influence exercised by Brahminism, Mahomedanism, popery, and infidelity at the present day. Draw the contrast, and then honestly confess the infinite superiority of gospel truth. Then, again, the gospel is universally adapted to the necessities of man—"it is the power of God unto salvation to every one." In this respect Christianity surpasses every other religious system that has existed among mankind. Others have been localized—this is universal ; others have been rushlights—this is a glorious sun ; it is at home everywhere ; it may be domesticated in every place ; it is the religion of the million ; and, like the light and the atmosphere, it is common property.

" Its streams the whole creation reach,
So plenteous is the store ;
Enough for all, enough for each,
Enough for evermore."

When we think of such things as these in connection with Christianity—the divinity of its origin, its glorious character, its powerful influence, its beneficent operations, and its universal adaptation to the necessities of man—we are not surprised that, notwithstanding the earthly poverty of its author, its opposition to all the religious systems then extant, its want of external pomp, and the persecutions which it invariably entailed upon its disciples and followers, Saul of Tarsus should nevertheless exclaim in the language of our text, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ."

There is, however, one word in the text which must not be entirely overlooked. "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ ; for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth." It is a good thing to hear the gospel, to read the gospel, and to talk about its truths ; but that is not sufficient to ensure the soul's salvation. There must be faith—penitent, lively, obedient faith in its great truths and principles, and especially in that which is its greatest truth, that Jesus Christ of Nazareth is the Son of God and the Saviour of the world. If you forget all the rest, do not forget that text which fell from the lips of him who cannot lie : " He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life ; but he that believeth not the Son shall not have life, but the wrath of God abideth on him." May God give his blessing for Christ's sake.

The following Nos. of the Penny Pulpit contain Sermons delivered at Exeter Hall.

- 1,700, The Great Exhibition, by the Rev. T. Binney.
- 1,701, The Gift of God, by the Hon. and Rev. B. W. Noel, M.A.
- 1,705, The Prodigal's Return, by the Rev. W. Brock.
- 1,706, The City of Refuge, by the Rev. J. Beaumont, M.D.
- 1,710, The Truth, by the Rev. J. Aldis.
- 1,711, Wisdom's Invitation, by the Rev. G. Smith.
- 1,713 Looking to Christ, by the Rev. J. Hamilton, D.D.
- 1,714, Why will ye die ? by the Rev. J. Stoughton.
- 1,718, The Testimonies of God, by the Rev. T. Archer, D.D.
- 1,720, The Book for all Nations, and for all Time, by the Rev. J. C. Miller, A.M.

(To be continued.)

THE TESTIMONIES OF GOD.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY EVENING, JUNE 1, 1851,
BY THE REV. T. ARCHER, D.D.
AT EXETER HALL.

"Thy testimonies are wonderful."—Psalm cxix. 129.

I MIGHT appeal at once, for the evidence of the truth of the words which I have now read, and to which I shall address your thoughts in the following brief and rapid sketch, to the experience and history of infidels, and ask them first, if those testimonies are not wonderful against which, for eighteen hundred years they have been employing all their power, and which yet stand out as fresh and clear and distinct as when the first moment they came from the lip of the living and true God? I might appeal for an illustration of the same truth to the minds of all Christian men, especially to aged saints, and ask if those testimonies are not wonderful which, having been examined by them for twenty or thirty or sixty years, still contain something new, and stand out as fresh, and living, and unexhausted as the first moment they were examined? To the angels in heaven I might appeal, and ask, are not these testimonies wonderful on which new light has been continually poured, and in which angels have been continually trying to grasp new thoughts, and are catching new ideas? and to the little child—the humblest of my audience—and ask if those testimonies are not wonderful; for while the angelic mind is completely humbled before them, the simplest, poorest child can come to them, and catch the knowledge of the way of salvation?

But why need we wonder at that? We are taught in the text that "the testimonies of God are wonderful." What about God is not so? Take the case of his own existence as an eternal being. Try to grasp the conception of that: the thought of a living one in the solitudes of eternity; the conception of one who lived when time had not yet begun, when no chronometer had marked its progress, and no pendulum had vibrated in the universe of the Eternal! Or take the idea of his providence: one God ruling over all, guiding, controlling the movements of every being; himself pervading all creation, and yet not destroying the freedom of any object in it; ruling over mind, yet leaving mind free and responsible; working upon voluntary agents by infinite spiritual might, yet leaving these agents voluntary still; controlling you, working on me; directing and guiding your mind and mine on to everlasting life, and yet leaving us subject to the authority and control of the great judgment day.

But why speak of Him? Are we not living wonders in ourselves? Our own microcosm, the little world that each one of us has in his own being, within his own sphere, is itself a mass of mystery. I have a thought in my brain: how it came there, how it acts there, when it came there, I cannot tell. My mind has an influence used upon it by my body, and my body again is influenced and acted upon by my mind;—my arm, my hand, my foot, the whole of my material organization is told by upon my mind within me; but where the *nexus*, the connecting point, is—where the link that unites mind and matter is—I cannot tell. The two things are so bound up together that they never can be severed, and I am lost in the riddle, in the unsolved enigma of my own spiritual and physical constitution. All about myself is a wonder—much more about God. Why, then, be astonished that his testimonies are wonderful too? The infidel tells us that there is something about them very plain and very simple; and at another time he tells us there is something about them very enigmatical and incomprehensible: the two things put together make the whole of these Scriptures unworthy of belief. There is no pleasing him. If I speak of the plain truths of the Bible, he tells me that they are so plain that reason itself could discover them; and if I speak of the wonders of the Bible, he tells me they are completely incomprehensible. Mind not these things; fall back upon large truth; and believe that if God speaks, and breaks the silence of eternity to instruct you and me, he will speak in such a way as now to convince our reason, and now to baffle it; sometimes to bring out an idea on which by simple argument we can come to a clear and distinct conclusion, and sometimes cast round us the haze and wonder of that glorious mystery by which he himself is distinguished.

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Now I come to the argument of this passage. I enter not now upon any wide speculation. I conceive this is not the purpose of these sermons. If it were so, I should have taken no part in them. The purpose for which we assemble is to bring out the simple word of the living God, and to recommend Christian and simple spiritual truth in all its clear rhetoric and force. With that remark I will proceed to the examination of the text, "Thy testimonies are wonderful."

First of all, the testimonies of God are wonderful *in their contents*. All I can do here, of course, is to refer to a few silent and striking points. To go over the contents of Scripture would require not one sermon, but many; not one meeting, but many. All I can do is to recommend these contents, and present their wonderful character, by touching upon a few of the more prominent and out-jutting topics. The grandeur of the declarations of these contents will strike every mind at first. Their grandeur, their sublimity is unequalled. Begin at the beginning. Take those words in the first chapter of Genesis: "God said, Let there be light, and there was light." May I be allowed for a single moment to say, as I pass on—especially to Sabbath school teachers, Christian Instruction agents, and others working in the same field—that we have here one of the great practical contradictions of Dr. Johnson's aphorism, "Great thoughts require big words." His own expressions are a contradiction of the idea he wishes to bring out. "God said, Let there be light, and there was light." The whole expression is monosyllabic—pure, racy, striking Saxon—and yet conveying to us one of the noblest and mightiest ideas of which we can have any conception; and presenting therefore to young persons, in an age in which style has almost run mad with foreign dogmatism and high sounding words, the duty of clothing their thoughts in the simplest, most condensed, and clearest form of expression, not aiming after large-sounding words, which after all may convey no meaning. "God said, Let there be light, and there was light." Longinus, the ablest critic in the ancient Greek school, has said: "These words convey to us the sublimest idea that ever came from any pen." Imagine it. Our earth is now a region in which all is dark and gloomy; in the far distant fields of the universe of the living God, all is dark and gloomy too: those planets have never cast a beam upon our earth, and would require millions of years to do so. In a moment the voice of the Eternal God speaks, and says, "Let there be light"—and light there is. The whole of the immensity of that creation is illumined with splendour, which hitherto had been an entire darkness. A voice—one single utterance—and the authority of God is seen in that mighty and glorious creation. Look next at the wonders of Mediatorial interposition. Zechariah brings out to us an expression, the force of which perhaps we have not always seen: "Be silent, O earth, before him; for the Lord is raised up in his holy habitation." Imagine it. We go back to Greek mythology, and imagine the idea of Jupiter rising from his temple. A higher flight is here. The eternal God, the all-living and glorious Jehovah is now raised up, as if he were taking a wide sweeping glance at that creation where sin had been raging, and raising up himself, that by his own mighty arm now outstretched, he might aim a more deadly and fatal blow against all the powers of sin and hell. Go to the close. The judgment throne is now set; myriads of beings are now assembled in the presence of the Eternal, more numerous than the leaves of the forest in a quiet autumn night, and quiet as those leaves are, unruffled by one single Zephyr blast. All are mute. The judgment is pronounced; and on to the eternal home of God go a whole mass of human beings rescued by the power and blood of Christ; and down to the deep regions of the lost pass those who have sinned against the authority of Christ. "The heavens and the earth flee away, and no place is found for them." Students of poetry, admirers of eloquence, give me one single expression within the compass of your reading that equals that—"the heavens and the earth flee away, and no place is found for them." Think of it. Rushing on, as it were, in one cataract of living fire, those myriads of stars, those masses of beings that God himself has created—rushing on as if from the breath of his nostrils and the glance of his eye; and no centripetal point to which they can go—not one place on which they can rest. Such is the simplicity, and yet such the sublimity of the Eternal. Young persons, if you want to catch the poetry of thought and the inspiration of the mightiest genius, familiarize your minds with the word of God, and you will get there ideas

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which no where else are brought out, and thoughts more burning, more commanding than ever human fancy dared to dream of. Such, then, is my first point.

I pass on from the grandeur of the contents of these testimonies to consider, in the next place, their wonderful, their perfect simplicity. The thoughts which I have brought before you from the sacred volume are thoughts not only marked by their grandeur and majesty, but by the pure simplicity which breathes through them all. I need hardly say that this is one of the great marks of Almighty thinking. Thought which is the highest is the least elaborate; genius the most commanding is the least showy and the least profuse,—it brings itself out in the simplest and clearest way. Mark the contrast of the Word of God with some human writings; compare the writings of by-gone ages with the writings of modern times. A page from John Howe, from Richard Baxter, or from Jonathan Edwards—a single sentence from any one of these men would be a whole fortune to a modern thinker, simply upon the ground that these men cast out the thoughts with simplicity,—without profuseness, without elaboration. The word of God is marked by the same great feature; there is no elaboration in it; the contents of that blessed book are brought out with simplicity,—naked simplicity, clear, and worthy of God himself. There is no elaboration of a little thought, but the great thoughts are cast out naked upon the world.

Again, consider the prodigious variety by which its contents are marked. Tertullian says that Scriptures are like a great lake, in which some parts are so deep that an elephant may swim in them, and other parts so shallow that a child can wade through them. Look at them! The mightiest intellect in heaven is overwhelmed in the contemplation of some of the truths of the word of God; and yonder blue-bonnetted peasant in some quiet sheeling in Scotland can study that word—can by that word be refreshed and live. The mightiest mind that ever lived upon earth, such as Newton's, Milton's, and Locke's, are completely overwhelmed with the contemplation of that blessed gospel; yet the poorest puritanical student could find enough in it on which to feed and obtain everlasting salvation. I go to the land of Hebron, and there I see the patriarch in his tent, and behold him in all the gentleness of his nature; I come to better times, and hear the ringing cry of the song of Miriam and Moses; I go now to the court of Artaxerxes, and behold the splendour of Persian life and Persian grandeur; and now to Babylon, and hear the shout of the battlefield; and again to the sunny slopes of Bethany, and see my blessed Master with Mary, and Martha, and Lazarus. There is in that blessed word, in short, something for everybody; in its prodigious variety something for the philosopher to overwhelm him; for the man of taste to cultivate his mind; for the man of eloquence to cheer and delight him; for the politician to instruct and guide his mind; for the warrior, to direct his thoughts amid all his engagements; for the poorest man, to console him amid the griefs and toils of life; and for the richest and most affluent, to open his heart and purse-strings for the poverty and wretchedness of mankind.

Nor can we overlook the originality and suggestiveness by which the Word of God is distinguished. It brings out to us glorious thoughts; it gives ideas which you never can exhaust. Allow me just to give one distinction as I pass along. In an age in which we have a large amount of pretentious literature, and a large amount of genuine and true literature, carry with you this truth in studying magazines and different kinds of periodical literature. Originality makes you think; imitation makes you remember. I cannot give the idea which comes over my own mind more simply than in these words. The grandeur of original genius is this,—it stirs up life beneath the ribs of death. If a man has got anything in him, that original mind will bring it out; if he has nothing, that original mind will put something within him. Mere second-rate and second-hand mind will give nothing and stir up nothing; primal, original, distinct, inventive mind, is sure to create something, and stir up whatever is there. I will give you a specimen. It was my privilege to sit at the feet of the most illustrious orator that my native country ever produced—I mean Dr. Chalmers—the most glorious mind, not only in point of depth, but in the tenderness and simplicity of character which ever distinguished him. No man perhaps under heaven was so characterized by gentleness and sweetness of mind as that man was. To hear him speak in the morning, while lecturing to the first philosophers of Europe, and making them thrilled

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that book was written is a completely different one—one unspeakably higher. It comes to you and me as sinners, fallen and condemned, yet responsible; it comes to us to meet us in these different conditions, and to lift us up from them. Mark it. There is a poor wandering soul—the word of God does not come to teach that soul astronomy; there is a poor spirit upon earth—the word of God does not come to lay open to it the stratifications, arrangements, and geognostic periods of the earth: its object is something higher and more commanding. The grand purpose of that blessed word is to fashion upon a man's mind the likeness and image of Christ, and to take up a poor sinner, and make him conformable to the will of Christ, and everlastingly happy with him; and that not in one case only, not in yours, nor in yours, only, but in the case of myriads. Let my friends who have heard me give the idea before, excuse me if I repeat it. We have not yet come to the beginning of millennial epoch; that epoch is described in the sacred volume as a thousand years; but is it a thousand years simply of days and hours? If I take the calculation of the book of David or the Apocalypse, I find a day stands for a year; the seventy weeks are seventy weeks of days of years; two and a half days are not sixty hours, but two years and a half; and if so, the millennial epoch is not simply a thousand years, but a thousand years of days of years, that is, a period consisting of 365,000 years; during all which time the gospel is to be gaining its triumph, Christ to be gathering his crown, to be obtaining new trophies and new triumphs in all parts of the earth. Eternal God! how glorious thy triumph, and how vast the power of thy word; when from east to west, and north and south, and stretching over all the earth, thine own gospel shall make the people willing in the day of thy power; and the sublime reward of thine own Son shall be gathered in, in the conversion of myriads of spirits to himself. Such then is the purpose of the word of God. We enter upon the great work in which we are engaged with that agency—the word of God. Contemplate the change of a human being; contemplate ultimately the change of millions. I go back to the period of the Crusades; I look to the time when along the banks of the Rhine, and wandering over the plains of Germany, thousands and tens of thousands of persons went, shedding the blood of the poor trampled Jew, and the blood of their own compeers, in their engagement, to do what? To rescue the fancied sepulchre of the blessed Lord from the grasp of the infidel. Brethren, your purpose is much more sublime—your weapons and your machinery much more glorious and much more pure; your work is to rescue souls: your power is not in the falchion, the spear, and the sword, but the word of God, and the Spirit combined with it.

I pass now to the third point, and merely mention it—that these testimonies are wonderful in the evidence by which they are supported. Here I might refer to the two great leading points of Christian testimony—miracles and prophecy—which, after all, are more kindred than we imagine. What we call a miracle is a wonder in fact; what we call a prophecy is a miracle of thought. A miracle is something which God only could do; a prophecy is something which God only could think and know. A prophecy is a miracle in truth and in idea. One point of evidence however (and those who do not comprehend the distinction I have incidentally referred to will comprehend this) is the evidence self-evidential—the working, the practical testimony of the Word of God upon a man's own heart. Dr. Chalmers, to whom I have referred, used to give us this illustration; and it will be found in one of his volumes. Suppose a supernal canopy were to come down from heaven, fitting exactly the earth below; there is a hollow here, and in the canopy there is something to fill it up; a protuberance there, and in that canopy there is a hollow to receive it: who would not conclude that he who made that canopy, and set it down upon the earth, knew all the earth distinctly and clearly; in other words, that it was God? Now, in this book there is a canopy that comes down upon my heart: every grief I have it meets; every want it supplies; every sin it pardons; every necessity it comes in contact with. Who, therefore, can doubt for a single moment that the God who made my heart is the Being who sent that Book down upon me? Christian man, ask your own experience; does not the Spirit of God bear witness with your own spirit in this case? Is there one grief you ever brought to this blessed volume which you did not find relieved? One sin you ever brought to the cross of Christ which you did not find pardoned? One imperfection in your nature which the Spirit of Christ could not

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overcome? In one word, is there not in myself a complete adjustment to this blessed book, and in this blessed book a complete adjustment to my nature? The more a man thinks of this truth—the more a man looks at his own heart and at this blessed volume, the more he will find a complete correspondence and happy adjustment between the written thing without and the felt thing within.

I might refer, before I close, to another point—the wonderful preservation of that testimony. There are books for which some of us as scholars would pant now; we get a line of them, a single scrap, and that scrap makes us desirous to get the whole. You get a sentence from some of the old ethical writers, or some of the old orators and poets, and you pant to ascertain where the writings are of which you have just got enough to awaken a thirst, and to enkindle a deep and ardent desire for more. This book, the Bible, lies before me. Four thousand years ago some of it was written; eighteen hundred years ago the last of it was written; yet there it is in all its fulness. The works for which men of genius and taste have panted are passed away; a fragment here and there you may have, but the mass is gone. This word, however, lives, and lives in spite of the opposition of those individuals who directly opposed it. Gibbon employed his ponderous literature, Bolingbroke his subtlety, and Paine his banter and ribaldry; and yet the book is now. At the close of the last half century they told us that the book was a fate-book worn out, and would soon pass away for ever. But here it is, and where are they? Past, lost, living only upon a surreptitious memory in some cases, and living in all cases wrecks—memories of what they once were. Robert Owen tells now that its day is past; socialists tell us now that religion is come to an end; we have got a priesthood of literature, and the priesthood of the New Testament has now seen its day, and run its course. In vain. Men who came with giant spears, had their spears shattered and broken by the pedestal of Christian truth; men who come with weapons of straw can only expose their own folly, and prove the madness and infatuation of their course. If religion stood then in all its calm benignity, canopied by the love of the eternal God, and smiling, not in contempt, but in the calmness of self-possessed security; that religion has nothing to fear now; and our blessed faith can still stand out massive and masculine as ever it has been. But there is another class of enemies to this book, who have done all they could against it; secret, suppressed foes; professing friends, yet real enemies. I need hardly tell my friends the old story of the converted Jew in Paris. He had been touched by a knowledge of the gospel, and he went to a sceptical Frenchman, who said to him, "Go to Rome—see Christianity there—go to the pope and the cardinals in the Vatican—go to the centre of Christian truth." He went; and when he returned the Frenchman asked him, "Are you of the same opinion?" "I am," he replied. "Did you see the pope and the cardinals, and the manners and habits of the people?" "Yes." "And you are still a Christian?" "Yes." "Well," said the Frenchman, "that is singular." "Not at all," said the Jew, "I believe that no religion, except it had come from God, could have outlived the wickedness of its professed priests and ministers." My friends your faith has outlived not only the direct attacks, but the secret, suppressed enmity of men; and the Bible stands before you and me now as full and as rich as ever it has been, in all the grandeur of its character—the living word of the living God.

Fifthly, and lastly, consider the wonderful effects of these testimonies: individual effects, domestic effects, political effects. First, individual effects. Go to the heart of Africa, and look at Robert Moffatt. He is coming down to the Cape of Good Hope, bringing a man with him who was called "the devil of Africa;" he was a savage, and no one who came in contact with him was safe. Yet a word touched him; the gospel came to him, and it melted his heart. Look to India; look to Greenland; look to Labrador; look at the Church of England missions in Tinnevelly; look at the missions of any part of the Christian church; and you will find that wherever a single word of these blessed testimonies comes home to a man's heart, he sits down gentle and calm, and weaned like a little child before God. Look again at domestic influence. Look at yonder kraal of that Hottentot; look at yonder sheeling in that Scotch mountain,—the very roof so weak that it can scarcely keep out the winds of heaven, or the rain and mists of that desert and wild land. Look at yon rugged Scotch face, and listen to yon rugged Scotch voice praising God in noble

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strains. You hear no murmur. That wild, rough sheeling is blessed with spiritual comfort. There is no wealth there; and the man perhaps does not know where to-morrow he shall get bread for his little child or grand-child; but there is comfort, and peace, and quiet within—that inborn sunshine of the soul that no storm can disturb, and no shade can overwhelm. Look again at two countries lying close to each other; you can go from one to the other in an hour and a half. One is distinguished by its vine-clad slopes, marked by beauty, imagination, and genius; and I know of no people under heaven, who, if they had the gospel, would stand out so distinguished and glorious as the French, to whom I refer. France, though it has given birth to Voltaire, has produced some of the finest mathematicians, and noblest orators, and best poets, that ever lived. Look at that country, and our own: one country ever rocking amid the surges of insurrection and revolution; the other standing out, thank God! as it does stand out now—a place where all the nations of the earth can come, and from which they will never be banished. What makes the difference? Not the sunny clime, not the gorgeous genius of the one; nor the deep and living force and fervour of the other. The only thing that has made Britain what it is, is the power of religious truth, and the force of that living word which is the great kindler of all genius, and the great break-water against all crime and insubordination. Would to God that those who call themselves statesmen and legislators, would feel this—that the truest foundation of a country's strength is the word of God; that the brightest gem in the coronet of a monarch, and the surest defence against all usurpation, come from whatever quarter it may, is that blessed and glorious testimony which is our individual comfort, and the peace and joy of our roof-tree. Look at the description given by Cowper of the English cottage woman, working quietly

"at her own door,

Pillow and bobbins all her little store."

toiling and labouring on: a poor woman who

"Just knows, and knows no more, her Bible true,
A truth the brilliant Frenchman never knew."

And then look at the contrast he draws between Voltaire, with all the splendour of his genius and the high renown of his life, and that simple-hearted woman.

"Never heard of half a mile from home."

Look again at that young person lying upon a bed of sickness, with a hectic flush, and now and then a wild, shooting gleam of the fire of death—she lies upon that bed, almost etherealized enough by consumption to pass to heaven without going to the grave—she is calm, for the Spirit of God is with her, and the word of God is her comfort.

Then study that blessed word. Let all your opinions be brought to it; let every thought, every idea, every imagination of your heart, and every dogma be brought to it. Use all the means which God has given you to study that word distinctly and clearly. Young persons, you have opportunities now which I and others of the same age had not when we were young. You have many opportunities of studying that word—means of coming to a knowledge of it by books simply and cheaply brought before you. Use such advantages; employ all the powers which God has given you; and endeavour to realize practically and experimentally the blessings which that book confers. And, finally, circulate it, we live in an age when it can be circulated; and we have reason to thank God for its being now so widely spread abroad. Think only of its being translated into one hundred and fifty languages, as may be seen in that great collection of industry which you must all have visited. Remember this also—that the surest and best defence of an empire is the possession of that book. I enter now upon no political controversy—this is not the place nor the day for it—but I would say in a single word, that amid all the controversy, political and theological, in which we are now engaged, if we wish to keep out Popery from Italy, and Neology from Germany, the surest and best protection we have is the circulation of the word of the living God. Lift up that, then, as the great charter of your liberties, and stand upon it as the great rock of your spiritual and living faith. Which may God grant, for his name's sake.

THE BOOK FOR ALL NATIONS, AND ALL TIMES.

A Lecture

DELIVERED ON TUESDAY EVENING, JUNE 3, 1851,

BY THE REV. J. C. MILLER,

(Rector of St. Martin's, Birmingham.)

AT EXETER HALL,

Before the Young Men's Christian Association.

My Christian friends, had our Crystal Palace been designed for a colossal library—for a colossal Bodleian, or a colossal Vatican, books might have been found to fill it. Long ago the wise man said, "Of making many books there is no end." If Solomon could say that many generations ago, the invention of printing, and the advance of civilization, have given to his words a meaning and a truth of which not Solomon himself ever dreamed. I suppose that even our modern literature would prove to be too large a store for the colossal proportions of the Crystal Palace. We have only to look at the publications of Messrs. Longman, or of John Murray, or of Thomas Hatchard, during a few months; we have only to look at the advertising columns of the *Times* newspaper, and we shall at once see that our press is teeming from day to day with volumes, and with publications of all kinds, and of all sizes, from the penny serial which comes hot from the writer's brain, to the ponderous volume which involves the research and the toil of many years. So true it is, sir, that "of making of many books there is no end." But in the midst of all this there is, as I am to remind you this evening, one which is pre-eminently *the Book*. Its last page has now been written about eighteen hundred years. It comes with an authoritative claim from man's Maker to be the revelation of his will, and to be the message of his mercy and of his truth. It has been transcribed by numberless pens; it has been translated into many versions; it has been assaulted by the infidel; it has been scrutinized by the scholar and by the critic; it has been tested by the experience of millions of the human family in their aspirations, in their joys, in their sorrows, in their hopes, and in their fears; it has been clasped and chained by churches which were not able to abide its light; and yet, notwithstanding all this, this wondrous Book of which I speak, has been in more hands to-day, perhaps, than on any previous day in its history; its circulation is progressing from day to day, and almost from hour to hour; it stands forth to us, and to the families of the earth this night as the Book for all nations, and as the Book for all time. And I might argue from the mere fact of its adaptation to the great human family, under all circumstances and in all ages, to its divine origin and inspiration. I propose this evening (which I regard as a very important opportunity of bearing a witness for the word of God,) in the first place to direct the attention of my auditory—and I shall do this as briefly as I can—to the claims of the Bible to man's faith and obedience; in the next place I shall endeavour to show that it is the Book for all nations; and, lastly, and somewhat more concisely, that it is the Book for all time.

Let me, then, my Christian friends, glance briefly at the Bible's claim to our faith and our obedience. This, sir, I need not tell you is becoming almost every day a topic of greater importance. The days in which we live are days in which this book is not only assaulted by the infidel, but its inspiration, its claims to our faith and to our obedience, are being undermined by subtle and specious theories put forth even by those who are professing Christians. Now, it is exceedingly important that we should bear in mind that the Bible

does carry with it a claim to be the book of God ; I mean by this, that the Bible does not leave us simply to reason out the notion that it must be the Book of God by reason of its adaptation to the wants of man. I would start then, with this for a first principle—and there are many here who will understand its importance in the present day, when it is more or less assaulted by the class of writers to whom I allude—that the Bible carries with it a *claim* to be the Book of God ; that there are countless passages in the Bible in which, for example, we meet with such expressions as these : “the Word of God,” “the Scriptures,” “the Law,” “the Prophets,” “the Psalms,” and so forth ; and that almost innumerable variety of expression which is used by David in reference to this blessed Book—to that portion of it, I mean, which he had in his possession. This class of passages is very important, because here is a set of phrases, here is a class of terms which clearly shows us that the Bible itself refers to its own Divine authority, inasmuch as these terms imply the notion of some sacred canon of Scripture ; and it is exceedingly important that we should understand what we mean by the Bible being the word of God, because it is an inspired book. Depend upon it that amid the many conflicts which seem almost at our very doors, amid the many clouds which are gathering upon our horizon, there is none more perilous and threatening, there is none for which the Christians of this land would do better to prepare themselves, than for that assault which is already beginning, and which in a more or less specious form is unquestionably to be made upon the inspiration of the word of God. Now it appears to me that, although this subject is a very difficult and a very mysterious one when we look into it, (for what operations of the Holy Spirit of God, I would ask, are not mysterious ?) two extremes are to be avoided. In the first place, it is perfectly clear (the remark is an old one, but it is very important) that the sacred writers, writing as they were moved by the Holy Spirit, were not in any such sense the mere machines or penmen of the Holy Spirit as to lose their own mental peculiarities. It is impossible for any man to read his Bible without shutting up the Book with this conviction—that the mental cast of Isaiah, for instance, was very different from the cast of mind of Ezekiel, or of Jeremiah ; and, whatever may have been the precise nature of the working of the Spirit of God upon the minds of these and other sacred penmen, it is unquestionable that their intellectual idiosyncracy was not destroyed. But, on the other hand, we must bear in mind, whatever may be the difficulties, whatever may be the mysteries of the subject, that if we are not to regard the facts given us in the word of God as recorded with unerring truth—if we are to suppose that there was left the slightest loop-hole for the sacred penmen to make mistakes in their history, any more than in their doctrine, then (I know not whether you, sir, and this meeting will agree with me) it appears to me that we have shaken the hold of the word of God upon our reverence and faith to its very foundations ; for, if I once admit there is the slightest possibility of mistake, (I am not now speaking, of course, of the Bible, not stopping to correct the wrong notions which were entertained with regard to science in those days but I am speaking of the facts recorded in Scripture, as well as its doctrines;) if you once admit that the sacred penmen were allowed to go wrong in these respects,—if you do not take the whole Book as inspired in its history as well as its doctrines and precepts,—you have shaken its hold upon my faith and upon my obedience.

But there is, as we are all aware, another very formidable danger in the present day,—namely, the undermining of our faith in the word of God by what are commonly termed rationalistic or neological views. I am not about to enter at all deeply into this subject, because I do not consider it exactly a point of the topic entrusted to me to-night ; but still I believe that many in our different congregations and meetings hear the words *rationalism* and *neology* used, without any very definite understanding of those terms. Let me endeavour to give you one or two instances of what we mean, when we speak of our faith in the Bible being undermined by these rationalistic or neological views. Supposing, for example, that you and I instead of taking the record of the first chapters of Genesis, the narrative of

Job's life, of the temptation of our Lord in the wilderness, or his transfiguration upon the mount, or some of the miracles of the New Testament, as simple facts historically recorded for us—facts which happened just as they are recorded by the sacred penmen,—were to imagine that these are mere allegories or fables, under the guise or by the machinery of which it was intended by God we should learn certain spiritual lessons. Suppose, for example, (to take an instance of the rationalism of Strauss) when we read that our Lord told St. Peter to go and cast his hook into the sea, and that there came up a fish and the money was found in its mouth, we explain that miracle upon this hypothesis—that St. Peter simply went and in the exercise of his occupation as a fisherman, was fortunate enough to catch a fish, the sale of which in the market-place produced exactly the money he required for tribute for his Master and himself; suppose we once begin to interpret our Bibles in this manner—and recollect this is rationalism—the neology of the school which is being introduced only with too lamentable rapidity among ourselves, and especially among our learned men,—what is to be the result? Does any man in this auditory believe that the word of God will retain its hold upon the faith of the people of England if such exposition and teaching as this is to have its way? And therefore I say that we are in very, very great danger from the attacks of rationalism, no less than from the assaults of open infidelity.

Before I pass on I cannot help adverting for a moment to that which appears to be very much akin to this; namely, the very irreverent mode in which a certain class of writers and of lecturers,—popular lecturers,—are accustomed to refer to the subject of inspiration. Now I would particularly refer to one of the most dangerous writers; I mean Emerson. I believe Emerson's book, which I have before me, to be one of the most dangerous books which could be put into the hands of a thinking young man. I mean to say, that if I had to deal with an intelligent and well disposed young man, I should augur less ill from his reading a far, far grosser book than from his reading such production as the essays of Emerson. I will just give you a very brief specimen of what I mean. The point to which I particularly want to direct your attention is this—that it is the habit of these writers to confound what we call in popular language, the inspiration of poetry with the inspiration of the Holy Scriptures; so that you will find in their writings that they seem to draw no distinction between the inspiration which was enjoyed by St. Paul or by Moses, and the inspiration, so to speak in our popular phraseology, which enabled Milton to write his *Paradise Lost*, or Shakspeare his plays. To show that I am not misrepresenting this, let me read to you only two sentences from one of Emerson's essays. "When the gods come down among men, they are not known; Jesus was not, Socrates and Shakspeare were not." Now if that does not shock the feelings of reverence which every Christian young man must entertain for the word of God, I am greatly surprised and disappointed. There is no assertion, it is very true, about our blessed Redeemer there; but surely, my young friends, it is very shocking to have Jesus classed with Socrates and Shakspeare! And then, again, in a passage which is all the more dangerous, because, as it must candidly be acknowledged, there is so much of talent in it, (and there is a vast deal of talent throughout the whole of this volume,) speaking of certain inferior prophets, he says that "they may endure for a night, but Moses and Homer stand for ever." Now it is very true that Homer's poems will, in all probability, live to the end of time; but, I must repeat, there is something very shocking to one's feelings of reverence for the word of God—something very nearly approaching, as it appears to me, to a degree of blasphemy against that Holy Spirit by whom the Scriptures were inspired, when a man attempts to put the inspiration, such as it was, which Homer enjoyed, on a level with that which enabled Moses to write the Pentateuch! I believe, sir, we must be prepared to expect that the attack will be made, to a very great extent, upon the Old Testament,—not only upon the Old Testament miracles, but upon the other contents of the Old Testament. I find that even such a thinker as Samuel Coleridge can bring the things

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which are recorded in Scripture so far to the test of his own reason and of his own judgment, as to be very unsound, as it appears to me, upon the subject of inspiration. Objections are made, for example,—they have been made for generations past,—to the morality of the Old Testament. People point to the case of Abraham ; they point to the case of David ; they point particularly to the existence of polygamy ; and they say, "This is the morality of the Old Testament!" Now, in the first place, let us ask, Is there any passage in the Old Testament in which these things are praised ? These things are historically recorded for us ; but is there any passage in which they are commended ? Do we not rather see, whenever we have anything like a detailed history of the consequences of sin, either in David or in any one else, that those consequences were misery and mischief to themselves and to those around them ? Or take the same question in another way. Has the Bible produced immorality where the Bible has been read, and where the Bible has been taught ? Is it the general effect of the wide diffusion of the Scriptures that with all these apparently objectionable histories, as they are called, in the Old Testament, it has made either men, or women, or children immoral ? I believe, sir, (and I mention it because the thought has been of great service to myself—I know not whether it may appear of the same value to some of those here present, or whether it may seem very old and familiar)—it appears to me that with regard to the morality of the Old Testament we trace exactly the same law which we trace in all God's works. The law of God's works and dealings is *gradual progress*. Mankind had been in existence many generations before the great discovery of printing was made ; they had been in existence many generations before the wonderful powers of steam were found out. We might be inclined to say, "How much better it would have been for the ancient nations if, in the providence of God, they had been led or prompted to discover these things ! Why were they delayed to these comparatively modern times ?" Now I would say that there is an analogy between this progress in the arts and discoveries of civilized life, and the gradual dawn of that bright and pure morality which came in with the evangelical dispensation, and under the pure and perfect teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ. Even in the Old Testament I would maintain that, if we carefully study it, we shall find that there are these great principles to be traced distinctly in it,—that love to God and love to man are the fundamental principles of all true religion, and of all service of God. And we shall find more than this ; that even in the ceremonial law given to the Jews, they had over and over again declared to them, by Moses and by their prophets, the utter inutility and unacceptableness of ceremonial obedience and external worship, without true spirituality of heart. But I will not dwell upon these preliminary thoughts ; they are merely thrown out in order to give a few hints for the reading and for the study of some of my young friends who may be before me, and who in these days will need to have their minds armed and fortified against the dangers I have pointed out.

I proceed, sir, to that which is, in the next place, my more immediate theme, and shall endeavour, as our time will permit me to-night, to show that this blessed Book of which I speak is entitled to be designated, as we have ventured to designate it in the announcement of this lecture, *the Book for all Nations*.

In the first place, the Bible is a book for all nations because it has historical records in which all nations are interested, and which no nation can gain from any other source. Take, for example, the deeply interesting point of the common origin of the human family ; contrast the account given us in the word of God, brief as it is, mysterious as it is, with the account in the Vedas and the Shasters of the Hindoos—the absurd notion that one particular class sprang from the shoulders of Brahma, another from his thighs, and another from his feet. Take the brief account of the division of the earth. Take the brief account of the diversity of languages. If you shut up the word of God—if you take this word of God out of the hands of the nations of the earth—I would ask, What records have the nations of the earth—what sure and

certain records of these deeply interesting events in the history of the human family?

Then again, sir, the Bible is the Book for all nations because it has a message for all nations. I pass by as foreign to my point, the difficulty (which of course would be a distinct subject in itself,) of the non-universality of the revelation given to man; that is, that there are many nations of the earth which have never yet, in the mysterious providence of God, been blessed with the light of the gospel. All that my argument requires me to maintain to-night is this; that wherever the Bible reaches, there it will be found to trace out those wants and that disease which are common to the whole human family. The restless mind of man, the troubled conscience of man, the aching heart of man will find in this blessed word a message which answers, and which soothes, and which is adapted to all those wants, and all those aspirations, and all that disease. The Saviour whom that Bible holds forth was emphatically termed in prophetic language, (as you will hear in a subsequent lecture,) the "desire of all nations;" and the announcement of the gospel is not—that God so loved the Jew, or that God so loved any particular nation of the earth, but, "God so loved the *world*, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life." So that wherever the missionary sets his foot, whether in the midst of the continent of Africa, or upon some distant island of the southern sea, or amid the snows and the ice of Greenland, there he feels he has a message for man; and he feels that blessed Book which he carries in his hand, and that blessed gospel which is upon his lips, is designed for every son and daughter of the fallen race of Adam, who will receive the Book and the message in obedience and in gratitude, in love and in faith.

Then again—not to dwell long upon these separate points—I would observe that the Bible has principles of action for all. I would particularly apply this remark to nations; I shall come to individuals, I trust, before I close the lecture. The Bible has principles for all nations; and I shall not exclude from this remark that portion of the Word of God with regard to which I am sometimes disposed to think we make a considerable mistake; I allude now to what are called by way of distinction, the political enactments of the Mosaic law. It is a commonly recognized distinction that the contents of the Mosaic law are divided into the ceremonial, which are abolished; the moral, which are lasting; and the political. Now, unquestionably, the political precepts of the Jewish economy are not obligatory upon any nation; but at the same time, if they are not obligatory, they are not obsolete; and it appears to me that, allowing for the wide diversities between the circumstances of a nation like ours and the nation of Jews—allowing for the differences of climate, the differences of their relation to one another, and of their relation to God, especially while they were under a theocracy—it would be well for our statesmen and legislators to consider the principles of deep wisdom and of mercy to man which are to be found embodied and pervading even the political precepts of the Mosaic law.

Then again, to apply this thought in a manner which will be akin to the great event which is interesting us all at this time. There are principles in this blessed Book which are calculated to promote union and brotherhood among all nations. The Bible will be found the best peace-maker, after all, among the nations of the earth. The Bible predicts a blessed time when its own truths will, through the Spirit which indited it, be found to triumph, and when peace shall prevail because the gospel of the grace of God shall prevail. Let me apply this to the present Exhibition, which is bringing the representatives of all nations together. It is said to have had its rise in the mind and in the heart of Prince Albert; and I am sure we ought not to deny this. In a certain sense it is true; and we ought to be very grateful, when we read the history of our nation, particularly the memoirs of our court in past generations, that we have such a husband for our Queen; and thankful to have such a Queen over us. But I must be allowed to say, with all loyalty and with all respect to Prince Albert, that I go a little higher than his mind and heart for the principles of the Great Exhibition. I go to the

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Word of God; and I believe it is because that word of God is known by that Prince—it is because he loves and reads that word that he has discovered those principles, and is endeavouring to propagate them by means of the Exhibition—because he has found in that blessed book, that which all may find in it : “God hath made of one blood all nations of the earth ;” and that the church of Christ is, not a sect, or a denomination, or a party, but one great and universal brotherhood which binds together the barbarian and the Scythian, the bond and the free, because Christ, the head of that church is all and in all. The church of Christ, understood, not as Rome understands it in her arrogant pretensions, not as Tractarians misunderstand it, in their miserable bigotry, but the church of Christ in its true catholicity, as the blessed company of all faithful people, is the universal brotherhood for all the nations of the earth.

But I might appeal, before we pass on to this point, to experience. I will ask any young man here—though it is difficult to suppose the case I want to put—What would the world have been at the present moment without the Bible? What would have been the state of our knowledge, the state of our morals, the state of our happiness? Is there any thoughtful man in this assembly who will not say that the earth without the Bible would have been a hell long ago? And what would it be if we could destroy the Bible from the earth now? It would be almost impossible to do it, Sir; for even if we were to destroy the book itself—if we were to destroy every copy of the Old and New Testament, still, blessed be God! the Bible has so leavened our literature—so many hundreds, and thousands, and tens of thousands of books have been written as based upon the Bible—such large portions of the Bible are quoted in those books—that unless you destroy pretty nearly all the books in the world, it would be impossible to destroy the word of God. But I would only ask, if it were possible to take away that volume, leaving all the remnants which there would be in theological literature of the country, leaving the mere footprint, if I may so speak, of the Bible upon the desert of this world—What would be the effect upon churches? What would be the effect upon nations? and what upon individuals? And what will be effect upon education in this country, if the evil day shall come, when the word of God shall be shut out from schools, supported by the money which we vote. But why do I speak thus? We need not put the hypothesis; we may put this to the test. There are plenty of nations which have not the Book; and what is the state of these nations? I sometimes think, when I hear some of our English grumblers talk about their grievances in England—talking, when they have perhaps been a fortnight or a month in France, or some other part of the continent, as if everything were done better there, than in England—that it would be well to get these grumblers to try a little banishment in some of those countries, where the word of God has not free course, and is not glorified. They would find, perhaps, sunnier skies, and more beautiful landscapes; they would find broader rivers, and more luscious fruits; but I believe, there is no country under heaven where they would find, on the whole, the same national blessings. Does any man doubt what is the real cause of the want of liberty in Austria? Does any man doubt what is the real cause of the degradation of Italy? Does any man doubt what is the real cause of the restlessness of France? of the revolution of Spain? or—alas! that we must have it—of the spiritual thralldom and intellectual degradation of Ireland? Does any man ask, what would be the speedy and certain effect of letting the blessed word of God be unclasped, and unchained, and having free course in Austria, Spain, Italy, France, and Ireland? The reason of the degradation of those countries is not to be found in any defect in the nations themselves. The pages of history attest, that there is chivalry in the French, and in the Spanish character—that there is heroism in Italy, and that there are many noble elements in the character of our Irish fellow-subjects. I believe we sometimes greatly wrong the men and women of Ireland. You will find even in the poorest Irish wanderer that comes to our shores, and lands at Liverpool, and increases the Poor-rates of the town, a great many noble elements. The chain that has bound him down, has been that galling chain,

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the heaviest link in whose yoke is this—that it shuts out from the poor Irishman, as it shuts out from the Austrian, the blessed book of which we are here speaking to-night. The savage and the sage have tasted this book, alike in ancient and in modern times, and all have found that there is in it a wonderful adaptation to the wants of man. I remember some years ago, I was sitting upon this platform at a meeting of the Bible Society, and I heard a very beautiful illustration from the lips of one of those respected ministers who will succeed me in these lectures: it was an argument from analogy as to the adaptation of the Bible to the mind, and conscience, and heart of man. The analogy was drawn from the eye, from the lungs, and from the ear. I remember that the speaker made a great impression upon my mind, and upon the mind of the auditory then present, by saying that he might imagine a certain set of persons who would like to improve a little or to alter the laws of light, or the laws of sound, or the laws of the atmosphere; but, as he well argued, the same God that made the light made the eye; and there is an adaptation of the eye to the light, and of the light to the eye; the same God that made the lungs made the atmosphere; the same God that gave the ear gave the laws of sound. So we find that as there is an adaptation in these natural and physical things, there is likewise an adaptation in this book, which we maintain is for all nations, to the hearts and consciences of all men. You will see how wonderfully this is attested by a quotation which I will read to you, and which you will be surprised to hear comes from the pen of a man who argues that the Bible is a human work, such as the *Principia* of Newton or Descartes. This is a very remarkable testimony coming from such a man:—

"This collection of books has taken such a hold on the world as no other. The literature of Greece, which goes up like incense from that land of temples and heroic deeds has not half the influence of this book from a nation alike despised in ancient and modern times. It is read on each Sabbath in all the ten thousand pulpits of our land; in all the temples of Christendom is its voice lifted up week by week; the sun never sets on its gleaming page; it goes equally to the cottage of the plain man and the palace of the king. It goes into the literature of the scholar, and colours the talk of the street. The bark of the merchant cannot sail the sea without it; no ship of war goes to the conflict but the Bible is there. It enters men's closets, and mingles in all the grief and cheerfulness of life. The affianced maiden prays to God in scripture for strength in her new duties; men are married by scripture. The Bible attends to them in their sickness when the fever of the world is on them; the aching head finds a softer pillow when the Bible lies underneath. The mariner, escaping from shipwreck, clutches this first of his treasures, and keeps it sacred to God. It goes with the pedlar in the crowded pack, cheers him at eventide when he sits down dusty and fatigued, and brightens the freshness of his morning face. It blesses us when we are born; gives names to half Christendom; rejoices with us; has sympathy for our mourning; tempers our grief to final issues. It is the better part of our sermons; it lifts man above himself. Our best of uttered prayers are in its storied speech, wherewith our fathers and the patriarchs prayed. The timid man, about awaking from this dream of life, looks through the glass of scripture, and his eye grows bright; he does not fear to stand alone, to tread the unknown distant, to take the death angel by the hand, and bid farewell to wife, and babes, and home. Men rest on this their fears and hopes: it tells them of God, and of his blessed Son, of earthly duties, and of heavenly rest."

* * * * Now for such effects there must be an adequate cause. That nothing comes of nothing is true all the world over. It is no light thing to hold with an electric chain a thousand hearts, though but an hour, beating and bounding with such fiery speed. What is it, then, to hold the whole Christian world, and that for centuries? Are men fed with chaff and husks? The authors we reckon great, whose word is the newspapers and the marketplace, whose articulate breath now sways a nation's mind, will soon pass away, giving place to other great men of a season, who, in their turn, shall follow them to eminence, and then oblivion. Some thousand famous writers come

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up in this century to be forgotten in the next ; but the silver cord of the Bible is not loosed, nor its golden bowl broken as time chronicles its tens of centuries passed by. Has the human race gone mad ? Time sits as a refiner of metal ; the dross is piled into forgotten heaps, but the pure gold is reserved for use, passes into the ages, and is current a thousand years hence as well as to-day. It is only real merit that can long pass ; tinsel will rust in the storms of life ; false weights are soon detected there. It is only a heart that can speak deep and true to a heart, a mind to a mind, a soul to a soul, wisdom to the wise, and religion to the pious. There must, then, be in the Bible a mind, a heart, soul, wisdom, and religion. Were it otherwise, how could millions find it their lawgiver, friend, and prophet ? Some of the greatest human institutions seem built on the Bible ; such things will not stand on heaps of chaff, but on mountains of rock. What is the secret cause of this wide, deep influence ? It must be found in the Bible itself, and must be adequate to the effects."

I think we shall all agree that this passage is very eloquently written ; but our admiration of its eloquence will be equalled by our disappointment in learning that the writer of it is a man, disbelieving the inspiration of that book which is so wonderfully adapted, according to his own showing, to all nations.

But we are also to endeavour to show you, my Christian friends, that if the Bible is, on this account, a book for all nations, it is a book for all times. We shall never outgrow the Bible. There are many men who talk and write, as if they were about to outgrow it ; but, depend upon it, Sir, the Bible will outlive the nostrums of the empirics to whom I allude. It is very remarkable to observe, in a volume to which I have already alluded as combining so much of talent with so much of mischief, the union of derogatory notions of inspiration with an undue elevation of man. I have read to you one or two brief sentences from the lectures of Emerson, to show that his notions of inspiration are very painful to the Christian mind, and very dangerous to all. Now, it is observable that in combination with this, there is a most lamentable exaggeration and idolization of what is called, in that jargon in which this school of writers seem to delight—a sort of half-German English which one may be jealous of, for it is spoiling our pure Saxon—the "possible" of man. Let me give you an idea of what I mean. His own words are better than any description of mine. He says : "that true Christianity, a faith like Christ's in the infinitude of man, is lost." *A faith like Christ's in the infinitude of man!* That is, I suppose, (though it is difficult to interpret these phrases) that there are some inexhaustible resources in the soul of man, and that man is continually progressing to a state of optimism.

Now, with reverence be it spoken, I believe the Lord Jesus Christ had no such faith, and that he does not teach any such faith in the infinitude of man. When I turn to the teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ, and to the book of which I speak to-night, I find that man is represented in a very, very different light from that in which he is represented by these lecturers. I find that it requires the operation of God the Holy Spirit upon the soul of man to enable him even to think a good thought, or put up a hallowed desire to his God. He says again : "See how nations and races split on by the sea of time, and leave no ripple to tell where they floated or sunk. And one good soul shall make the name of Moses, or of Zeno, or of Zoroaster reverend for ever. None assayeth the stern ambition to be the self of a nation." What miserable self-exalting jargon this is ! "None assayeth the stern ambition to be the self of a nation and of nature ; but each would be an easy secondary to some Christian scheme, or sectarian connexion, or some eminent man. Once leave your own knowledge of God, your own sentiment, and take a secondary knowledge, as St. Paul's, or George Fox's, or Swedenborg's, [Ah ! my friends, this is the popular lecturer, this is the man who is almost the founder of a school,] and you get wider from God every year this secondary form lasts : and if, as now for centuries, the chasma yawns to that breadth that men can scarcely be convinced there is anything in them divine"—then, as an exhortation suitable to such language, he says : "Yourself, a new-born

bard of the Holy Ghost, cast behind you all conformity, and acquaint men at first hand with Deity." Ah! when we think that such lecturing and such writing as this has gained a very prominent popularity among the thinking men of England, it may well make us tremble for the future destiny of this country; it may well make us tremble, not lest the Bible should perish—that is beyond the power of man or devil to destroy—but lest this nation should lose its blessed privilege of being a Bible-honoring, a Bible-loving, a Bible-preaching, and a Bible-circulating nation. I have said, we shall never outgrow the Bible; the Bible will outlive Emerson, depend upon it, as it has outlived many who have gone before him. We do outgrow a great many things: one thing comes up, and pushes another thing out of its place. Printing has pushed out manuscripts to a great extent; the gas in our streets has pushed out the old oil lamps; railroads have pushed out the six-or-seven-mile-an-hour coaches of past days: so that I sometimes think it is a treat to get on the top of an old-fashioned coach, if one can be found, and to make one's way through the heart of an English village or country town, and recall the scenes one used to see when travelling in this way. But you may depend upon it, though civilization may advance, the Bible is as much needed now, and will be as much needed until the Lord comes, as it was needed to achieve the great work of the Reformation. The school to which I have adverted has a favourite song, and I remember, when going to my Ragged School in Birmingham, hearing a poor little ragged urchin singing it,—"there's a good time coming." I thought this poor ragged fellow had not a very definite idea of the "good time coming," but I must maintain, Sir, there is a good time coming. I am sure our chairman most thoroughly believes it; he believes that there is a very good time coming; but it will not be when man has outgrown the Bible. The good time coming is that good time predicted in the Bible; a good time that will be brought out by the knowledge and circulation of the Bible, and by bringing men to see the fearful irreverence—shall I be wrong, if I say, the blasphemy?—of such language and such theories as those to which I have referred to-night. And hence we find that that book of which I speak, is the great object of Satan's opposition. I do not know anything that teaches me the importance of the word of God more than the fact that I find in every age of the church, and even in my own brief life-time, that Satan has employed a different policy and a different line of tactics, all seeming to have for their object to dishonour or keep out of men's minds the blessed word of God; sometimes by the iron despotism of Rome; sometimes by the notion which Tractarians have, that the Bible is an insufficient book without the prayer book. There is a large number of men who would not trust the Bible for the world without the prayer book tacked to it. I do not wish my young dissenting friends to think from this remark, that I do not love the prayer book. I do love it, and I believe that some of the ablest of our nonconformist writers have acknowledged in stronger language almost than any other writers, the beauty and sublimity of that book. And I believe there is many a candid and catholic-hearted Dissenter who, as far as the mere worship of the prayer book goes, could come to church on a Sunday and worship with us, and find edification. Indeed, I have heard dissenters say, that they could thoroughly enjoy the church prayers. But with all my love for the prayer book, there is such a chasm, and I hope always to remember that chasm—between the inspired word of the living God and the word of man, that I cannot consent to have that book, much as I love it, put on a level with the word of God. I most earnestly rejoice that we have institutions among us that have for their object the circulation of that word alone. I rejoice in our tract societies, in our Christian knowledge societies; but still I say, let us have a society which circulates nothing else but the word of God; and then I know that we have a society that circulates a Book for all nations and for all time—a Book which cannot possibly have any admixture of error.

I have spoken, sir, of the Church of Rome. I cannot help thinking, in connection with our subject to-night, that if our proposition is true, Rome's claims are unquestionably false; for how can she be, as she assumes to be, the Church for all nations and for all time, if she takes out of the hands of

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her members the "Book for all nations and for all time?" But then it may be said, and it is constantly said, that it is not true that Roman Catholics do not get the Scriptures, and that they do not read them. Now, how stand the real fact? I have no doubt in the world, my young friends, that if you were to go into the shop of a Roman Catholic bookseller in London or in Birmingham, you would be able to get plenty of Bibles; because in large cities, and with the light of Protestant England beaming upon them, and the eyes and ears of Protestant England open, especially as at the present moment, you may depend upon it they will contrive to have Bibles forthcoming when they are asked for. But I should like to ask one question. It may be that some Romanist has strolled in to-night to hear what was to be said—I do not think we often meet without having some of them among us—and I should like him to answer this question: whatever may be the case with regard to the circulation of other versions in certain places, is it, or is it not a fact (I am willing to meet any Roman Catholic upon this platform on this point, from Cardinal Wiseman downwards) that in the index of prohibited books at Rome, the Bible has a place? I do not mean the Bible in the Protestant version; I think we should be unreasonable to grumble with Romanists for not taking our version of the Scriptures—we have no right to expect them to do that—but I want to know whether these are not the words in the index of the prohibited books:—"Since it is manifest by experience that if the Holy Bibles are allowed everywhere, without difference, in the vulgar tongue, more harm than good will arise from it on account of the rashness of man, let the judgment of the Bishop or Inquisitor be abided by in this matter; so that, with the advice of the Parish Priest or Confessor, they may grant the reading of the Bible in the vulgar tongue, translated by Catholic authors, to those whom they shall have found and ascertained to be likely to derive no harm, but rather increase of faith and piety from this sort of reading; which permission they must have in writing. And if any one shall presume to read or possess them without such permission, he may not receive absolution of his sins unless he first deliver up the Bibles to the ordinary." I want to know—for there is nothing like a plain matter of fact—is that, or is that not the authorized language of the Church of Rome? Is it a libel to say that in that church the blessed Book which contains the word of God, is a prohibited book, if I, as a Catholic layman, am obliged to go to my priest or bishop to get a certificate to allow me to read it? But there is some hope, although John Bull may be a little caught with the pomp of Romish cathedrals, and with the beautiful chants of the choristers, and with Sisters of Mercy, that he will not bring himself to go to Cardinal Wiseman or Bishop Ullathorne, for license to read the word of God. Then from Pius IV. there is the following cautionary rule: "That since it is manifest from experience, that if the Bible be indiscriminately permitted in the vulgar tongue, more injury than benefit will result from the rashness of man, the use of Catholic versions shall be granted by the voice of the priest or confessor, to those alone who, it is understood, will not be hurt by the reading of them, but will be advanced in faith and piety." These are the authoritative words of Rome; and I believe that these words alone are fatal to her pretensions to be a pure branch of the church of Christ. I do trust that we shall all along feel in this land of ours, that if churches are to be pure, and are to abide the test of God's truth, the laity must have the Bibles in their hands. I trust we shall feel that if education is to do us any good, that education must be leavened by the word of God; and that it may long, ay, to the end of England's day, be a fundamental principle with her that the Bible is the Book not only for all time, but for all nations, and for her.

It is time I should begin to draw these remarks to a close; but I cannot do so without attempting somewhat more in the way of practical application, I did not understand that I was to come here to preach a sermon; but, at the same time, I believe the design of those who instituted this course of lectures was, that an endeavour should be made, in humble reliance upon the blessing of God, to interest the young men who might be floating about the metropolis at this season, and who might be brought in to hear these lectures;

in the study of the word of God. And I am persuaded that none of us will think our labour lost, and that the committee of this institution will not think their expense thrown away, if only one young man who may have come to the metropolis at this season, a stranger to this Book, and negligent of it, having left an unread Bible behind him, should hear one single sentence which shall send him back, and make him, for the first time in his life, a humble, diligent, and prayerful student of that word. Oh ! my dear young friends, it matters not what may be our rank in life—it matters not what may be our age ; let me affectionately say to you that the study of this blessed Book becomes one like Joshua, who was exposed to all the toils and dangers of a soldier's life ; it becomes David, even amid the cares and temptations of his court ; it becomes the first nobleman of Candace's court as he rides his chariot ; and the youthful Timothy at his mother's knee. The Bible is for every rank and every age ; and oh ! let me affectionately warn any who may be here present how fearful and how heavy is the amount of guilt which is lying upon them at this time, if there is an unread Bible upon their shelves, or in their home. You cannot, my dear young friends, have a more fearful witness to rise up and confront you at the bar of God than the Book of God unread throughout your day of grace upon earth. What should we say to the son who received a letter from a father in a distant land—one whom he professed to recognize, and to love, and honour, as his father,—should he, even for a single hour, carelessly and thoughtlessly leave that letter unread ? Look upon this Book, I affectionately beseech you, as a letter from your Father in heaven, written in letters of light and of love to you ; and consider how fearful will be the evidence of your want of gratitude and of love to that Father, if his message has been neglected !

In the next place, let me give you an earnest caution. Do not be superficial readers of the Bible. Ah ! it is not much good to be superficial readers of the Bible—it is next door to neglecting it. Bible study and Bible reading are two very different things. We have much reason to dread the tendency in the present day to read much and to study little. Perhaps never was there more reading ; I will not quite say, never was there less study, but I might almost have said so. Certainly, the proportion which the study bears to the reading, both in ordinary literature and theological literature, is very very, small. We have got into the habit of reading short things, and pithy things, works of humour and of wit, and the result is, that for calm, sober, earnest, and, above all, for serious and devout study, there is very little time left, and there is less inclination and heart. What every Christian young man should aim at is this—to be, as one of old is emphatically said to have been, “mighty in the Scriptures.” It is not only the minister who ought to have the Bible, so to speak, at his finger's ends ; clergymen have no monopoly of the book, and no exclusive right to it ; and, let me add, we have no exclusive responsibility upon us for the study of that book.

Then let me urge you, most earnestly, before we part, to read this book with a right motive, and with a right spirit. Do not go to the Bible simply for its poetry. There is very beautiful poetry in it ; and it is impossible to read the sublime passages it contains, both in the Old and New Testament, without having one's soul moved by their poetic beauty. But do not go to the word of God simply, or chiefly for its poetry ; do not go to it simply, or chiefly for its profound argument—that, for example, which is found in the pages of St. Paul. Above all, recollect that in the exercise of what we call your private judgment, there is danger of a very great mistake. I am sometimes a little jealous when I hear the way in which some people talk about private judgment. Protestants as we are, we must remember that it is not enough to send a man to the Bible to form his opinions, and to get his creed, and to say that no man can impose that creed upon him ; but he must go to the Bible remembering that it cannot be rightly understood, that it cannot be made effectual for its great end, unless the assistance of its Divine Author is sought diligently. Oh ! my dear friends, I believe this is a lesson most sadly and lamentably forgotten by many of us. Many of us go to the Bible for our opinions and our creeds ; we do not take things at second hand ; we try

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churches by the Bible ; but what is the carnal mind of man when brought into contact with the truth of God ? The word of God distinctly repels such when it says, "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." The natural man may understand and appreciate the beauties of the Book of Job ; he may even, to a certain extent, appreciate the reasonings of St. Paul ; but he cannot discern the wisdom of the gospel, and cannot receive the things which are freely given to us of God.

And recollect, I would say, as we close to-night, the Bible distinctly teaches us, both in the Old and New Testament, the great end for which it was written. What does the Lord Jesus Christ say of the Old Testament Scriptures ? "In them ye think ye have eternal life ; and they are they which testify of me." The Old Testament is one continuous witness for Christ, and when we come to the New Testament, St. John distinctly tells us "These things were written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ and that believing ye might have life through his name." The Old and the New Testaments were written to be witnesses for Christ. My beloved young friends, I would say to you, as I sit down, go to your Bibles—Oh ! may God, in his infinite mercy, grant that it may be realized even in the case of one who is here to-night—go to your Bibles as heirs of eternity, as responsible creatures, as those who feel that you are drifting along the stream of time into the boundless ocean of eternity ; go as feeling that you have within you lofty aspirations, deep searchings of heart, many perplexities, many fears, many joys, many sorrows, many hopes ; and you will find that if you go in this spirit, the Bible will be to you the message of your Maker's mercy and of your Maker's truth ; you will find that the Bible, under the guidance of the Spirit who gave it, will lead you to God, and therefore lead you to happiness ; you will find that it will lead you from the Book of God to the God of the Book ; and that it will prove itself to be not only the Book for all nations, but the Book for you—not only the Book for all times, but the Book for all eternity.

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The following Nos. of the Penny Pulpit contain Sermons delivered at Exeter Hall.

- 1,700, The Great Exhibition, by the Rev. T. Binney.
- 1,701, The Gift of God, by the Hon. and Rev. B. W. Noel, M.A.
- 1,705, The Prodigal's Return, by the Rev. W. Brock.
- 1,706, The City of Refuge, by the Rev. J. Beaumont, M.D.
- 1,710, The Truth, by the Rev. J. Aldis.
- 1,711, Wisdom's Invitation, by the Rev. G. Smith.
- 1,713, Looking to Christ, by the Rev. J. Hamilton, D.D.
- 1,714, Why will ye die? by the Rev. J. Stoughton.
- 1,717, The Gospel, by the Rev. Luke Tyerman.
- 1,718, The Testimonies of God, by the Rev. T. Archer, D.D.
- 1,724, Salvation, by the Rev. G. Clayton.
- 1,725, The difficulties of speculative Inquiry, by the Rev. J. H. Hinton, A.M.

(To be continued.)

SALVATION.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JUNE 8, 1851,
BY THE REV. GEORGE CLAYTON,

AT EXETER HALL.

"In the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive; for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.")—John vii. 37—39.

"A word spoken in season how good is it." Much of the beauty and force of an observation will be found to depend upon its being well timed. There should always be an agreement and harmony between the sentiment and the season. Those, therefore, who are called to speak with a view to the instruction and the edification of others, should study "the times and seasons" which pass over them; eagerly availing themselves of those favourable moments when the attention of men is excited, and when their feelings are interested. The distinguished orators of Greece and Rome were very attentive to this particular; and in their writings which have come down to us they have laid great stress upon this very point, which they endeavoured themselves to illustrate, as those remarkable addresses which are still extant abundantly testify. But, my hearers, there is one who "spake as never man spake," one in whom was "hid all the treasures of wisdom and of knowledge," one who surpassed all in the true excellencies of speech, for "grace was poured into his lips;" and you can be very little acquainted with the discourse of our Lord and Saviour as recorded in the inspired Scriptures of the Evangelists if you have perceived how he seized all occasions, profited by all opportunities, in order the more successfully to announce those glad tidings of great joy, which he came down from heaven to publish. Behold here an instance of it. "In the last day, the great day of the feast"—the sacred historians have been at pains not only to record what

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he said, but when he said it, in order that the correspondence may be clearly discerned between the discourse and the season. "In the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." This great feast was the feast of Tabernacles; the first and concluding day of which were observed by the Jews with extraordinary solemnity and devotion. We are told that on this last day of the feast the custom prevailed of drawing water from the fountain of Siloam, and pouring it out before the Lord in the presence of all the people, at the time of the evening sacrifice. There was at that particular moment a vast concourse of persons collected; every eye was fixed; the sacred ceremony was now actually performing; the water was streaming from the vase in the sight of all the people—and at that moment Jesus rising, and standing on an eminence, exclaimed in the hearing of them all—"If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." The water which you now see poured from the sacred vessel expresses the desire of the people for the advent of the Messiah, and the increase of the Spirit by him according to ancient prophesy and promise. "This day is the Scripture"—as if he had said—"fulfilled in your ears." I am the fountain of living waters; "if any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink."

Can you picture to your minds a scene more interesting in itself, or an occasion more appropriately important with a view to the instruction, impression, and edification of the people that are come up to-day to keep the feast of the Sabbath? In this mountain, the Lord of Hosts has made a feast unto all people, the Holy Ghost is ready to descend in showers of blessing upon the heads and hearts of the assembled multitude, and the voice of Christ is again heard in the midst of us—"If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." Oh, that some, by the power and grace of that Divine Spirit, may slake their thirst this morning at the waters of life, and be thus invigorated for duty and prepared for suffering, till they shall drink of "the river of the water of life, which proceedeth from the throne of God and the Lamb," in a world of perfect knowledge, perfect purity, and perfect enjoyment.

In these words consider—

- I. THE APPETITE SUPPOSED—"if any man thirst."
- II. THE SATISFACTION PREPARED—"let him come unto me and drink."
- III. THE WIDE AND COMPREHENSIVE EXTENT OF THE PROVISION—"if any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink."

I. In the first place here is an *appetite supposed*—"if any man thirst." None will imagine that this refers to literal thirst. We all know what that sensation means when, by reason of the want of liquid, or the lack of moisture, the tongue becomes parched, the frame weak, fever ensues, anguish is felt, and if it be unrelieved, death terminates the scene. Now you are to transfer this to an intellectual, a moral, a spiritual appetite; it is the thirst of the soul which the text proposes to relieve. We will first account for it; secondly, describe it; and thirdly, we will show that it is of universal prevalence.

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First, We will endeavour to account for this thirst. How came man to be the subject of it? It would be incompatible with the perfection of Deity that he created any being with appetites and desires without providing for their legitimate and adequate gratification; and, with all reverence be it spoken, it as little behoves the perfection of the blessed God, to have created a soul with appetites, propensities, and desires, for which no provision is made. When he proceeded from the hand of God, he was a stranger to this thirst, no uneasiness, no restlessness, no feverish disquietude then disturbed his moral constitution. He was formed for the enjoyment of God, and God condescended to communicate himself to his creature—the spring and source of his enjoyment. Then he was in his element. But how different is the case now. Sin has disturbed the original order of things; sin has alienated man from God; sin has removed him from the fountain of enjoyment. “So he drove out the man;” he who once enjoyed perfect repose and refreshment in God now wanders through a parched and desert wilderness, thirsting even unto death. Would we know the true cause for this thirst; it is here. “My people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me, the fountain of living water, and have hewn out to themselves cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.” And what is the nature of this thirst? It is very difficult to define sensations; they are far better known by experience than description. But, perhaps, it includes in it three ideas—Want, Restlessness, and Misery. This thirst includes then want, emptiness, vacuity; the mind has an aching void, without God it is a stranger to everything like satisfaction. As well might we expect light in a beam cut off from the sun, the source of all radiance; as well might we expect permanence in the stream separated from the fountain, as to expect any satisfaction of mind without God. “My soul thirsteth after God, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land where no water is.”

Then there is a sense of restlessness—what may be called the fever of the mind; hence the perpetual anxiety which men discover after change, fleeing from object to object; just “as when an hungry man dreameth and behold he eateth; but he awaketh and his soul is empty; or as when a thirsty man dreameth, and, behold, he drinketh; but he awaketh, and, behold, he is faint and his soul hath appetite.” And thus you see men turning from thing to thing, from one object to another, “seeking rest, but finding none.” And then there comes a sense of anguish and of misery. Disappointed in the objects of pursuit, men turn away in disgust, saying, “miserable comforters are ye all.” For many feel the disappointment so keenly that they sink into despondency, and often conclude this thirstful scene by suicide and death.

You will observe, that this appetite supposed in the text is of universal prevalence. Some may feel it in a more intense degree than others, but no child of Adam’s family can be an entire stranger to it. The inquiries of men prove this. Their language universally is that represented by the Psalmist, “Who will show us any good?” Where is happiness to be found? How shall we

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become the possessors of it? The pursuits of men, too, show us that the object the whole world is engaged in is one and the same—they are seeking after happiness. It is true they adopt various measures to obtain it, but they all desire it, they all thirst after it. The toils of the studious, the investigations of the philosopher, the slumbers of the voluptuary, the retreat of the hermit, the cell of the recluse, the pursuits of the man of pleasure, the hoards of the miser, all speak one and the same language—I thirst. Then the regrets and lamentations of men prove this. When they find that the object which they universally desire is not to be obtained by the measures which they adopt to secure it they return, after panting in the chase, with bitter regrets, saying, “vanity of vanities, all is vanity.” So much for the appetite supposed.

II. Let us consider *the satisfaction which is prepared*, which is proposed and set before us in the text—“Let him come unto me and drink.” Think of the person, Jesus Christ himself, who offers the refreshment and satisfaction here exhibited. “God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him might not perish, but have everlasting life.” The eternal Son of God became man, in order that he might fulfil the law which we had violated, and endured the penalty of death upon the cross for us, and then rose again from the dead, and entered into the celestial mansions, that he might “receive gifts for men, yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them.” That gift is the Holy Spirit. And when he speaks to you of living water, he speaks to you of the Spirit; for the evangelist gives us a comment upon the language of the text—“This he spake of the Spirit, which they who believe on him should receive; for the Holy Ghost was not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified.” But the heavens have received him until the time of the restitution of all things. He has taken his position on the throne. “It has pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell.” He has the Spirit without measure, and that Spirit is committed to him for the enlightenment, for the conversion, and for the salvation of the souls of men; in him there is all the fulness of God; all is here that is calculated to satisfy the thirsty soul. Here is pardon for the guilty; here is liberty for the enslaved; here is peace for the distracted and agitated; here is purity for the vile, and everything that can contribute to our rational and religious enjoyment here, and to our perfect and full felicity beyond the grave. It is all in Christ, and all must come from Christ: “Let him come unto me.” “No man cometh unto the Father but by me.” This is the great and solemn truth presented to our view in the words “come unto me.”

Consider the means by which we are to get at this living water. “Let him

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come unto me and drink." These terms represent to us the true nature of the true and living faith by which we come to be actual partakers of this blessing which Christ has purchased and which he lives to bestow. It gives one an idea, first of the approach of faith—"Let him come:" and then the application of faith—"Let him come and drink." "He that believeth on me, as the scriptures hath said, from within him shall flow rivers of living waters." A knowledge of Christ, an approbation of Christ, an acceptance of Christ, are absolutely necessary, in order that we may obtain this living water. And the application is as necessary as the approach; you must "come and drink." I shall not enter into any refined discussion this morning, upon the distinction to be made between assurance and that reliance of faith which gives an interest in Christ and the blessing of salvation; but I may just observe, that the assurance of faith is one thing, and the application which faith makes of the blessing of redemption is another thing. Assurance is the resting of the mind upon its own consciousness of having received and embraced Christ, and having a personal and special interest in the mercies which he lives to dispense; but there may be very much of the application of faith, when there may not be a full assurance of it. Such an application as the sick man makes of the physician's prescription, when he is not content with reading it over and hearing it read, but when he follows its directions and applies the medicine which it recommends. And, my dear hearers, be assured of this, that without this practical application of faith to the blessing which Christ dispenses, there would be no true relief for the thirst of the soul. You will not experience its alleviation or assuagement, but as you go out of yourselves and repose simply and exclusively on him who says, "Come unto me and drink:" "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will you rest." We proceed to notice—

III. *The wide and comprehensive extent of the invitation*—"If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." Observe the extent; first, as to the character. Here is no special delineation given, no minute description of the persons invited; it is clothed in terms of the widest generality; it offers indiscriminately to all who are athirst the blessing of life everlasting: "If any man thirst"—be he who he may: whatever may have been his character, whatever may have been his country, whatever his age, whatever his condition; yea, place him in any predicament you please, however peculiar, in any conceivable predicament, still the language of the text finds him, "If any man thirst." Some, perhaps, would derive much consolation if they could see their names written in the invitations and pro-

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mises of the gospel; but better far that the matter should remain as it is, for it might happen that there would be two persons or more of exactly the same name, and in a moment of doubtful hesitation they might not be able to apply to themselves the promises and invitations of mercy which they might desire to appropriate. But see, the term now is very indefinite, and left very much at large. "The Spirit and the bride say, Come; and let him that heareth say, Come; and let him that is athirst come and take of the water of life freely." Consider the simplicity of the qualification—thirst. In a moment of discouragement, we might say this invitation is not for me; I fear that I do not thirst properly; I do not thirst vehemently; I do not thirst with becoming earnestness of desire. Do you thirst at all? I read nothing in the text about thirsting properly, vehemently, or rightly; I read simply, "If any man thirst." Do you desire happiness? Are you the subject of an inward feeling, of want, of restlessness, of anguish? Then you are the parties addressed; wherever you are to be found, in whatever circumstances placed, if you thirst, "come." One cannot easily conceive of an invitation brought down, in all its bearings, with greater adaptations to the condition and state of fallen man. Consider the indubitable sincerity of this general invitation. Can we doubt the sincerity of Christ, who offers, and offers thus freely, to give refreshment and rest to every thirsty spirit? Can we doubt his ability to relieve us, when he is "able to save unto the uttermost all who come unto God by him." Can we doubt his willingness to relieve us, when we have his own word, his own promise, and the great fact that he came all the way from heaven to earth, and lived and laboured, and agonized and died, on purpose that the thirst of perishing souls may be abundantly and for ever satisfied?

We learn, then, from this subject why it is that Christ is so little valued, so imperfectly appreciated by the sons of men. First, they are strangers to their own moral condition; the actual circumstances in which they are placed as sinners. "The whole need not a physician, but they that are sick." When the Spirit of God comes as a reprobation to convince of sin, and apprise us of our lost and ruined condition, when we feel the thirst that has been described in your hearing this morning, then it is that we shall fully estimate, prize, and admire the voice that says, "come unto me and drink." While men are ignorant of themselves, and unapprised of the necessity, the unspeakable necessity of an interest in Christ, no wonder that they despise and reject him! No wonder that he is regarded as a root out of a dry ground, in whom there is no form nor comeliness! No wonder that they hide their faces from him, and see no beauty in him. But, O, when we have been brought to feel this thirst and

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the misery which it entails, then are we willing to come to him who is "the salvation of all the ends of the earth."

From this subject let me intreat you to receive the inviting message which has been addressed to you this morning. "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." Have you obtained relief for your thirst? Have you come to the fountain? Have you applied by a living faith, in your own particular case, the blessings of redemption? O, my hearers, how mournful is the condition of those who "have ears but hear not," and whose "foolish heart is darkened," and who perish at the margin of the fountain: they refuse to drink while the stream is poured out before them, and in such unsparing abundance. How happy they who are favoured with the sound of infinite mercy; and how much happier they to whom that sound has been rendered effectual; who can say, we thirst no more. We have found him who is the light of life; the felicity and glory of them that believe; and "to you that believe he is precious."

Finally, what will be the condition of those in a future world who scorn the messages of infinite mercy, and turn away from Christ and his fulness, still determined to take up with the miserable relief which this world professes to afford to its deluded votaries: who have "forsaken the fountain of living waters," and endeavoured to supply themselves from the dirty kennels of the world. But, my dear hearers, I wish you to recollect that the voice still says, "come;" and remember that "now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation." "Seek the Lord," therefore, "while he may be found; call upon while he is near."

But if you pass out of time into an eternal state, without the relief which the gospel promises and applies, then what remains for you but an everlasting thirst, which nothing shall appease through the ages of a miserable eternity? I hear a voice from yonder world, saying, "Father Abraham, send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am tormented in this flame. Son, remember that thou in thy life time received the good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things, but now he is comforted and thou art tormented; and beside this, between us and you there is a great gulph fixed." O, it grieves me to the very heart, it overwhelms me with inexpressible sorrow, to think it possible that any in this assembly should have their final allotment on the other side of the impassable gulph! where so much as a drop of water to cool the tongue parched with agony will be granted to none. I therefore stand here to persuade you in the name of the Lord Jesus, and as you value those immortal spirits which are your distinction and your glory; and

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stand and call upon you in the name of Jesus, to come unto him and drink, should you despise the offers of his love, your case will be like that of the unhappy Esau, who "found no place of repentance" in the mind of his parent, "though he sought it carefully with tears." But his tears and his prayer came too late. May you call upon God in a time when he will be found. "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money, come ye buy and eat, yea, come, buy wine and milk, without money and without price."

May he who has made this rich provision, apprise us of our need of it, and enable and dispose us by his good Spirit to come and drink. Amen.

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- 1,700, The Great Exhibition, by the Rev. T. Binney.
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- 1,706, The City of Refuge, by the Rev. J. Beaumont, M.D.
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- 1,711, Wisdom's Invitation, by the Rev. G. Smith.
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(To be continued.)

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TO ESTIMATING THE NO.

ON THE DIFFICULTIES OF SPECULATIVE INQUIRY.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY EVENING, JUNE 8, 1851,

BY THE REV. J. H. HINTON, M.A.

AT EXETER HALL.

"When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me."—Psalm lxxiii. 16.

KNOWLEDGE is pleasant to the mind as light is sweet to the eye. And there seems to be full warrant for this kind of enjoyment. The sun, with its glorious fires, is lighted up for the eye; for the eye also the face of nature is illumined with its beams; and in like manner the universe seems to be outspread before the mind, on purpose to be known. At what point need the searching gaze of the eye be arrested? Or where need intelligent scrutiny be stayed? Do not nature and Providence court investigation, and recompense it with precious discoveries, ever new? Nay, more; a ceaseless pursuit of knowledge may be said to be obligatory. Our intellectual faculty is given to be employed, and its inaction would be as culpable as a voluntary blindness. Is it not in his works and ways that God makes himself manifest? And is it not our duty to trace him to the utmost, that we may recognize and adore?

There is, however, a limit to the pleasantness of knowledge. Its pursuit may become to us even painful; in the words of our text, "*too* painful." What, for example, is more pleasant than to survey the providence of God, with its vast benignities? And yet God's providence has in every age exhibited some fearful aspects, forbidding too close a scrutiny, and throwing back even the most resolute inquirer upon the inscrutable pleasure of the sovereign ruler. It was with a problem of this sort that the Psalmist was engaged when he used the words before us. He "saw the prosperity of the wicked," and it troubled him, "When I thought to know this," he says, "it was too painful for me, until I went into the sanctuary of God." In that position the solemn retributions of another world presented themselves as counterbalancing the inequalities of this.

Or take another illustration. What can be more pleasant than an investigation of the intellectual nature of man, his position, his prospects, and his destiny, under the government of God? Or, peradventure, to take a still wider range, and grapple with the vast problem of being, and of the universe? Yet inquiries of this sort lead to dark and fearful issues. However clear the light may be which is thrown upon matters of immediate moment, the speculative inquirer is soon introduced to profound questions and insoluble problems. Here, for example, is the outburst and prevalence of moral evil under the

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government of a wise and holy God. Here, again, is a vast amount of animal suffering in the creation of a benevolent God. Here is a being of free and responsible agency, under a system of eternal predestination and irreversible decrees. Here, moreover, are two worlds, the world within us and the world without us—the subjective and the objective; and nobody can demonstrate the link that connects the two, or the process by which we take cognizance of the external world. Some tell us that the subjective is illusory, some that the objective is illusory, and some that both are so, all things being only modifications of the deity.

At a period when, by the extended culture of a literary taste and of reading habits, the elements of speculative philosophy come to be widely known, difficulties of this class have their influence, and probably a very considerable influence. They operate in two ways. Some are by them thrown into a state of general scepticism. They are strong thinkers. They study hard. They can grasp nothing less than the problem of the universe, and they are resolved to find out the solution of it. They will know all things; and the obstructions they meet with, and the difficulties in which their inquiries land them, annoy and vex them. "We thought," say they, "to know this," and we are sure we have brought to the problem no mean powers, no insignificant industry; but we cannot, it is too high, "too painful" for us. To be thus shut up within a narrow circle of mystery, to be refused an answer to so many interesting questions, makes them almost angry. The language of their conduct is, "We can do nothing, we will do nothing, thus denied and embarrassed, but struggle and complain." If we hold out the Bible to them, and say, Take counsel of this, they exclaim, "The Bible? Explain to us the mystery of the universe."

There are others who do not feel this influence so strongly, but who, nevertheless, are embarrassed and distressed by what they come to know or hear of the difficulties of speculative philosophy. It seems to them as though these loudly bewailed difficulties might involve some very important deficiency, if not one fatally injurious to truth, and duty, and human welfare; and their fears are aggravated by their ignorance, inasmuch as they arise in reference to subjects which they are not able personally to master or to estimate. It is likely enough that by an influence of this sort the commencement of piety may in some cases be obstructed; and it is certain that by it the progress of piety has in some instances, perhaps in not a few, been vexed and harassed by painful and afflictive thoughts.

Now, it is my purpose, on this occasion, to suggest a few considerations by which this feeling of painfulness may be mitigated or removed.

I begin with a confession. I confess that I am not in possession of any solvent for the difficulties of speculative philosophy. I cannot solve the problem of the universe. I admit the reality of these difficulties, and their insolubility. I say this, however, that they are all of them reducible to a common element, and to a simple expression. They do not, either of them, nor all of them together, prove that there is anything really amiss in the constitution of the universe, or that the system of things, in any manner, or in any case, is out joint: they prove only this—the imperfection of our knowledge; nothing more. Our knowledge is restricted; and we are thus shut up within a circle of mystery. That is the truth, and the whole truth. Now respecting these restrictions of our knowledge, I submit several observations.

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I. The first observation I make is, that these restrictions of our knowledge are only part of a general system.

One might suppose, indeed, from the manner in which the difficulties of speculative philosophy have been announced, that they were the only difficulties in the way of human inquiry; and, if indeed it were so that there are no mysteries any where else, it might be deemed hard to find them here. But we know that the fact is not so. There are mysteries not only in speculative philosophy, but in philosophy of every kind. The animal world, for example, is full of mystery. The problem of animal life is to this day as mysterious and unsolved, and as probably insoluble, as it ever was. Pathology, the doctrine of disease, is as dark to this hour as any doctrine in theology. The vegetable world is full of mystery. There is not a flower or blade of grass that has not in it more of mystery than all the wise men in the world can remove. The mineral world is full of mystery. Scarcely a stone can you take up, but it presents to you the inexplicable marvels either of chemical affinity, or of crystallization. To mention these things is only to name a few out of a multitude. Everything around us is mystery. At every point is our knowledge restricted, and theoretical inquiry brought to a stand.

Is there any cause for wonder, then, at the mysteries and difficulties which attach themselves to speculative philosophy? The great questions connected with the problem of the universe are involved in darkness, not because there is any infelicitous peculiarity in them, but because they are among the objects of human knowledge, all of which are equally involved in darkness. The entire sphere of human investigation being thus restricted, it is altogether most natural and congruous that the region of speculative philosophy should be so. You cannot explain the mind of man and its mode of communication with the external world? Very well; there are a thousand things besides that you cannot explain. You cannot explain the existence of suffering among the animal tribes, or the cause of evil among mankind? Very well. We find mystery in every stone, and in every plant; what wonder then, if, when we come to inquire into the philosophy of man, and God's dealings with him, that we should find mystery there? What should we say if we did not? We should say, this is surely not a part of the same universe; or if it be, this is the greatest mystery of all. And as mystery should not surprise us, so neither should it vex us. Who is there that frets and murmurs about the mystery that there is in a crystal or a flower; in the process of nutrition, in the conditions of disease? Then why should a man who is so easily reconciled to all mysteries besides, be made unhappy when he finds that there are mysteries in his own intellectual nature, or in that of his fellow-man, and in the ways of God to both? May we not fairly say, be consistent? Either be displeased with all mysteries, or be reconciled to all.

II. My second observation upon this matter is, that restricted knowledge is an essential element of our being.

It would almost seem from the complaints uttered by speculative philosophers, that their difficulties had been imposed arbitrarily, and that it would have been easy for us to have been made to see and understand all these things. But this is not so. It is, indeed, not only because we are human, but because we are created, that there are mysteries to us; for there are of necessity mysteries to all created beings. It may be perhaps—though we cannot speak positively—that to God all things are clear—(for my own part, I do not feel at

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all certain that God's being is not to this hour a mystery to himself); but to *him only* can all things be clear. "His understanding is infinite:" but infinite knowledge cannot be possessed by any but an infinite being. To all created beings there must be mystery. They are finite, and the finite cannot grasp the infinite. They are but parts, and each but a very small part; and the parts cannot be conceived of as capable of comprehending the whole. To be dissatisfied, then, because of our restricted knowledge is to be dissatisfied that we are creatures. We have an ambition, every one of us, to be the Creator! None of us can be satisfied unless we be Divine! Every one of us must be a god! We must possess the attribute, that is to say, of perfect knowledge. Is not this, even allowing something for the pride of man's poor heart, even in the opinion of these philosophers themselves, being a little too proud?

But not proud only. To be discontented with imperfect knowledge is to be discontented with existence itself. Without restricted knowledge our existence is an impossibility. He who quarrels with the restrictions of his knowledge quarrels with the very possibility of his own being. The language of his heart is, "I would rather not exist at all, than exist without knowing all things." Is there then nothing, no end or purpose, for which it can be worth while for creature to exist? Is there nothing on earth or in heaven worth living for, although this one desire be denied?

III. In the third place I observe, that our knowledge, with all its restrictions, is amply sufficient for all practical purposes.

According to some, indeed, the mysteries which attend our existence supersede the cultivation of a practical regard to religion. We can know nothing certainly of our own being. Perhaps the external world is an illusion; perhaps the internal world is so; perhaps all is God, and responsibility a fiction. It is enough to reply to this foolish effort to throw the moral world into confusion, that, whatever illusions may attend our being, they are at all events universal, and not partial, and they ought to affect all departments of our conduct alike. If they supersede moral action, they should equally supersede secular action; if they render it needless to take care of the soul, they render it equally needless to take care of the body. If spiritual desire be illusory, so is hunger. If a sense of guilt be illusory, so is inflammation. If heaven and hell be illusory, so are sensible pleasures and perils. Yet the possible illusoriness of the earthly and the sensible withdraws no one, not even philosophers themselves, from treating them as realities. Illusory as the external world may be, every man toils in it as though its seemings were substantial facts. Illusory as the internal world may be, every man lives as though his appetites and passions demanded substantial gratifications. And though all things may possibly be God, men distribute rewards and punishments one among another without scruple. Why, then, does this system of practical action stop precisely at matters relating to the soul, to eternity, to God? There is clearly the same reason for treating these as realities, as there is for treating secular objects so; and there is much more reason for treating them with a solemn and anxious earnestness. O! if you treat any thing as an illusion, let it be the body, not the soul. Do not eat, do not drink, do not sleep: but—be reconciled to God, and flee from the wrath to come.

What argument is there, however, in saying that anything is an illusion, and not a reality? An illusion is a reality if it be really an illusion, and as a reality it requires to be treated. And illusions which are in their nature permanent

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make the same demands upon us if they were substantial verities. The great passion of life is an illusion, a state of feeling founded upon a set of false judgments. Yet who disregards it? Who knows not that it is the spring of our highest earthly joys, and the basis of our most important social duties? The element of its power is its permanence. And thus even granting that all things are illusory, this detracts nothing from their practical importance, if they also be permanent. Constant phenomena are to all intents and purposes facts. Now of the constancy and permanence of all the phenomena within us and without us, there can be no doubt; and consequently all of them claim to be regarded and treated as facts. God has evidently given life for practical ends; and to employ it for practical ends, as it is man's wisdom in things temporal, so is it man's higher and more incumbent wisdom in things eternal.

Practical purposes being the great purposes for which life is given, that is the most valuable knowledge which conduces to their attainment; and if knowledge is given us sufficient for the practical ends for which we live, there is clearly no very urgent reason, if any, for complaint. Now it is practical knowledge emphatically which God, generally speaking, has imparted to us. During the first ages of the world, certainly, men acted upon practical, and not upon theoretical grounds. They must have acted thus for many ages, or they could not have acted at all. Even now theoretical knowledge is studied and mastered by the few, and not by the many. To accomplish the practical purposes of life, God did not teach any body theory. Men fed themselves on the fruits of the field a long time before they studied the anatomy of plants. Navigation was practised a long while before any theory of the winds was made out—even if such a theory be made out even to this day. Boats went up and down the rivers a long while before men knew anything about the theory of the tides. Men practised physic before they knew anything about the theory of health and disease; indeed, so far as I can understand, medical practice is in great part empirical still. It is the universal habit, and unquestionable wisdom of mankind to avail themselves of whatever practical knowledge they possess for the attainment of practical ends, without waiting for theoretical knowledge, or troubling themselves respecting the want of it. Now I ask nothing more than this for religion; and I do not see why it should have less. Our knowledge is imperfect; but for all practical purposes there is in the Bible information enough. If man will consult it in a teachable spirit, and for a practical end, it will tell him all things. It will tell him his duty: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and thy neighbour as thyself." It will declare his danger: "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all unrighteousness and ungodliness of men." It will show him his remedy: proclaiming to him the "faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners," even the chief of them. It will prescribe his duty: "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." It will encourage his hope: "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest." "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." All this is in terms of pre-eminent simplicity and plainness. There are no difficulties here: he that runs may read, and the least instructed child may understand. Thus all that concerns our safety and our duty is plain enough. What is it then that we cannot understand? Why we cannot understand how evil came into the

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government of God. We cannot understand how responsibility in the creature can be reconciled with the predestination of the Creator. We cannot understand by what law it is that we get acquainted with the external world. Perhaps not. But of what consequence is this? Here is instruction that tells you how your present and future welfare may be secured; carry it out; obey it without waiting for the solution of your difficulties. Men act thus in other things. Do you see boatmen loitering on the banks of the Thames till they understand the theory of lunar influences? Are people kept back from distant adventure until they understand the theory of the trade winds? Do you see men refusing to practice physic until they can justify on theory the prescription they give? Do you see the farmers standing idle, resolve, to grow no corn until they understand the principles of vegetable physiology? Assuredly there are no such exhibitions of folly as these. And yet shall we see a man with precious immortal soul, liable to perdition, and standing on the brink of the grave, saying, I will not repent of sin and believe in Jesus till I can construct a complete system of philosophy, and solve the problem of the universe!

This is egregious and most fearful trifling. The immediate value of the practical results to be obtained, and in part the urgent pressure of our bodily wants, prevents such infatuation in relation to secular things; it is only with respect to the remoter interests of religion and eternity that so culpable a course is pursued. Yet the inestimable value of the soul, and the vastness of the world to come, place this at the very head of all questions of practical wisdom. The salvation of the soul should, before all things, be treated as a practical question. Wait if you please before you eat bread, until you understand the growth of corn; wait if you please before you take medicine, until you comprehend the theory of disease; wait if you please before you escape from the flames, until you are informed how the fire originated, and whence the ladder has been brought for your deliverance; but wait not till you understand any philosophic theory, wait not one moment, before you repent of sin, submit to Jesus, and make sure of deliverance from the wrath to come.

IV. I observe fourthly, that restricted knowledge is an important element in our moral condition.

God pursues a course towards us by which he applies tests to character. This is a state of probation, intended to bring out what is in man's heart. Now a state of restricted knowledge is adapted and requisite to this end. If we knew all things the scope for trial would be very much diminished, if not annihilated. For this reason it may be that we are restricted in our knowledge of some points on which it would have been possible for our knowledge to have been perfect. Many things, doubtless, God hides from us for a time for wise purposes; things which might have been known, but which are better concealed. There is a certain measure of concealment necessary to a state of probation. Statesmen, diplomatists, generals, in the execution of extensive designs, are obliged to conceal some things, things which if fully known would render their plans liable to be frustrated; and, on a similar principle, the all-wise God, while showing us all that is necessary for our welfare, shrouds himself in part in darkness, that, without premature exposure, he may work out his great and glorious ends. And this gives scope for faith on our part: faith as apposed to sight; faith in God's testimony concerning things which are not seen; faith in himself; submission to him, and reliance upon his wisdom and mercy in his dealings towards us. Now to declaim against all mystery, and

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to say that everything shall be told us now, is to place ourselves in a position highly dictatorial and foolish. Is it for the clay in the hands of the potter to say, after this fashion shalt thou make me? My brethren it does not become us thus to act. It is not competent to us to refuse the moral probation for which we are created, nor is it any demonstration of either wisdom or right feeling to fret against the conditions of the equitable trial to which, in divine though mysterious wisdom, we are subjected.

V. I observe in the fifth place, that with all its restrictions, the field of our knowledge is marvellously ample.

Judge of it by comparison. Set yourselves beside the beasts of the field: they are placed in the same world, beneath the light of the same sun, in the midst of the same scenery, and are creatures of the same power. But how small a field of knowledge is theirs! Ah! if you were shut up in a circle of mystery as small as theirs, you might perhaps complain.

Judge of it by fact. Look attentively at the immense field of observation and knowledge which is before you. Take a glance at science in its various departments: the department of natural science, either as it relates to this world, in the animal, vegetable, and mineral kingdoms, or as it relates to other worlds, there being comprehended under the single term astronomy more than a world, and almost a universe; the department of intellectual science, including not only the mind of man, but the entire spiritual world, with all its problems so far as they are within our reach; the department of moral science, including individual duty, and social problems of the greatest magnitude; and crowning all these, revealed science, or the knowledge of God and of his works from the light that is thrown upon them by this blessed book. By these few words I have directed your thoughts—as all of you who are acquainted with the vast field of science will perceive—to an expanse crowded with objects, and incapable of measurement. This is outspread before the human mind for investigation; and yet we murmur, because we cannot know all things!

Judge of it by human acquisition. There is no one man largely acquainted with all the sciences. No man can successfully devote himself to the study of all. Every man who means to know much feels the necessity of confining his attention to one subject. Hence one cultivates physics, another metaphysics, a third mathematics, and a fourth morals; while under a single department, its thorough investigation demands subdivision—so that in natural history, for example, it is enough for one to devote himself to shells, and another to seaweeds. For no large portion of its discoveries is science indebted to any one investigator. Discovery is an accumulation of contributions from many hands, and has resulted from the intense application of single minds, often through many years, and sometimes for a whole life, to some small portion of the great field of knowledge. And yet, how much there is that is not known! Although many inquirers have found their way across the vast expanse, there are yet large regions which show no footprints. There are probably more tracks untrodden than have ever been trod. And how very large a portion of scientific knowledge has been acquired within the last hundred years! Nor is there any reason to conclude that knowledge may not increase with at least equal rapidity for ages. And yet with all this glorious field before them, some will do nothing but vex themselves with a few insoluble problems. We read that Alexander, after carrying his conquests to what then appeared to be the utmost east, complained that he had not another world to conquer; but he did not do so

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till he had conquered this. Let us be comforted. Assuredly, our knowledge is more to be gloried in for its actual and possible extent, than to be repined at for its wise and necessary limitations.

VI. Lastly, I observe, that with respect to our knowledge, now restricted, we are in a position of brilliant expectation.

Ah, we shall know more hereafter, though not all things, I suppose, even at last. But we are on the eve of a glorious change; glorious in some respects even for those to whom it may not be a happy one. But a short time, and we shall remove from this world to another—I know not where, but somewhere in the world of spirits, where we shall behold glorious beings and glorious objects. Change of place will much augment our knowledge; and make us familiar in a moment with bright, glorious, and terrific things, which we have only heard of now, and which have been matters of impenetrable mystery. While change of place shall teach us much, change of faculty shall teach us more. Now we see by the eye, and hear by the ear; but the soul, released from the body, shall develop mightier faculties. We shall then, perhaps, be able to take in more knowledge in a moment than we now acquire in a whole life. The dispensation, too, will be changed. This is a dispensation, as I have said, in which God, for probationary purposes, hides things from us, and in which he will have us take things on trust, in order that he may test us; but the necessity for concealment will then have passed away. "That which we know not now, we shall know hereafter." God's veiled dispensation respecting us individually, and respecting the whole world of sin and misery, shall have been consummated, and the veil have been finally withdrawn. Everything shall be illumined by the blaze of that glorious light in which heaven shall rejoice, the light of the glory of God for ever.

O you that want knowledge, can you not have patience for a little while? not even for a moment? Knowledge shall come! Knowledge, not only of the things which you desire to know, but, peradventure, of many things which it may be your desire not to know. Revelation! Discovery! We are upon the verge of it! Even as I speak, the glories of eternity seem to open upon us, and in a moment we may be more than satisfied. Have we no patience for a single instant? Are we so very eager to know all?

Let me then ask you solemnly the question, Are you prepared to know all? The discoveries of another world, are you ready for them? Can you greet the new realities with joy? There will be revealed to you a glorious God. Will you be able to call him your father and your friend? There will be revealed to you the Saviour who once died for your salvation. Will you be able to call him the Saviour of your soul, and your adorable Lord? There will be revealed to you the company of the redeemed, singing praises to him that loved them and gave himself for them. Are you prepared to join in that song, having been made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light? There will be revealed to you an awful hell; the place of darkness, perdition, and despair. Will it be the place from which you have timely fled, and secured your escape? Or will it be the place in which, by a conscious fitness, you will discern your doom? Ah! boast not unthinkingly of your desire for knowledge. Press not your demand for drawing aside the veil of the unseen, if you have no interest in Jesus, no preparation for heaven. Why should you behold as yet, what could only fill you with terror and despair?

What, then, is the sum of the whole matter?—Some things are "too painful" for you to know, too difficult for you to comprehend; and on this account you are to waste life's precious opportunities in inaction and complaint. Pernicious and destructive fallacy! Avoid it as the entanglement of the spider's web. Or if you be in any measure entangled, burst it; it is but a cobweb, and requires only a resolution. Say rather, "I have immediate interests, and I must secure them. I must love Jesus; I must trust in his name; I must be at peace with God; I must live in his service; I must die in his favour."

THE GOODNESS AND LOVE OF GOD.

A Sermon

PREACHED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JUNE 15, 1851,

BY THE HON. AND REV. B. W. NOEL, M.A.

AT EXETER HALL.

"God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."—John iii. 16.

THESE words are commended to our attention by the fact, that they were spoken by the most exalted being that ever stood on this earth—the eternal Son of God incarnate, who came from heaven to earth that he might be able to say these words to us; and had he not come they never could have been spoken. They are commended to our regard by the fact that he died to be able to speak them; he had them so much in his heart that he would shrink from no endurance that he might be able to make this proclamation to us. This is substantially that message which an angelic being who became visible in his glory declared to be "good news of great joy," which should be for all people. If we have the same mind that they have in heaven, therefore, we shall feel that this single verse contains glad tidings of great joy to all mankind. This was substantially that message which one of the best and bravest of men that ever lived on this earth had so much at heart, that after he had toiled, and suffered many a-year, said to his friends upon a review both of his toils and sufferings—"None of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I may finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus to testify of the glad tidings of the grace of God." What he for many a-year laboured and suffered to proclaim, we may well employ an hour in considering. We may well think seriously of that which was committed to him to declare, and is now committed to us to receive, and the issue of the reception or rejection of which will be momentous indeed.

This passage first tells us that the Lord Jesus did not come into this earth, as many imagine, or misrepresent wilfully, that he might propitiate an implacable God, and that he might render that God kind in his dealings towards us, who would have been otherwise, utterly unkind; for it tells us that he came from the compassion of God, and not to render God compassionate, because God was from all eternity good. "God so loved the world,

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that he gave his only begotten Son ; it was his commission under which Christ came to save our guilty souls ; for the Lord Jesus offered to come and gather to himself from this degraded, and revolted, earth, a glorious company, and make them worthy of himself, love them as the pride of his heart, and carry them to his home in heaven, to dwell with him there in bliss unspeakable for ever. Why did he all this ? Because God so loved the world that he said, go forth and save them ; go down and rescue them. "He came from God." God is not an unkind, but the most compassionate being that is ; the best, the gentlest, the kindest, the most compassionate, the most forgiving, and the most benevolent of all beings. Does it do your heart good to witness kindness ? Have you ever seen remarkable instances of benevolence, and felt your souls throb with emotion at it ? Who gave that benevolence but God, and who gave you the faculties which that benevolence was adapted to move, but God ; and therefore he is more than that which he gave to you or to others. None is so good as God ; the greatest, and most merciful of all beings ; so holy that he abhors each departure from rectitude, so mighty that he can consign to ruin whom he will, and so powerful that resistance to his will is as impotent and helpless as it is criminal ; a being who gave us existence ; a being who holds our life in his hands, upon whom we absolutely depend ; and happy, happy, are we in knowing that that being is supremely good. His kindness originated the salvation that Christ came and provided.

From the passage before us let us learn the extent of the kindness of God. God loved the world ; "he so loved the world as to give his only begotten Son." Then there is not in this world a being that God does not love—"God so loved the world." Mark the words well—"God so loved the world," is the revelation our Saviour has made to us. Then there is not in this Hall a being that God does not love, not one ; there is not in this metropolis a being God does not love. We may gather from the recesses of this our city, I doubt not, some beings whose characters are atrocious, such as God would abhor, and that from your souls you would revolt at the picture of such infamous wickedness. Well, God loves them, for "God so loved the world." But do not misrepresent him, his word is very plain ; and we must not take on this occasion, neither on any other occasion single sentences, and abuse and exaggerate them : but compare one statement which God has authoritatively made with another. God does love the world ; but God does not love its sins ; God loves the sinner, but God hates his sins ; and, therefore, he has told us that those who are not changed from their rebellious nature are the children of wrath ; and he has told us that those who turn not to his Son are condemned already, and the wrath of God abideth on them : God loves the sinner, but God hates his sins.

There is a love of complacency which God has for the good ; he has it not for the wicked ; he cannot have it ; he would not be God if he did. There is a love of complacency, and I pray God that every one of you are being now the object of it. But it is not felt for any wilful sinner ; on the contrary, those who sin must be condemned ; not because he is harsh, but because he is good ; not because he is unjust, but because he is just. The justice of God must condemn that which is mischievous and wicked ; and as there is no weakness in his benevolence he will.

But there is a love of compassion too, as well as a love of complacency, and that he has for every intelligent being on this earth. Whatever may be your departures from God, my hearers, God pities you ; whatever may be your offences against God or man, God pities you ; for our God has said it here, and it is often repeated, "God loves the world." Do not think of him as a hard, dreadful, and implacable being that hates you, and whom you never can appease ; but remember, on the authority of Christ, that he has a deep and eternal compassion. At this moment the Almighty looks upon this revolted earth ; and what does he see here ? He sees the heathen that have preferred the most hateful idols to his worship ; he sees Mahomedans who have followed the lure of a false prophet to the abandonment of God ; he sees the Jewish race, to whom the Scriptures have been given in vain, and

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who have in the pride and perverseness of their hearts rejected his Son ; he sees the superstitions and idolatries of the church of Rome—idolatries which even the Jews learn to despise and detest ; he sees the Protestants with the Word of God in their hand, who have yet neglected its teaching, and love him not ; he sees society devoted to its interests, its lusts, its pleasures, and its gains, and will not turn to him ; he sees his own people, cold-hearted, timid, selfish, and afraid—all this he sees, and compassionates them all. He has given them innumerable blessings ; day by day they are upheld by him, or they must have perished ; his sun shines on them, and his rain nurtures their harvests. Thus, whatever the sins and wanderings of men, he is ready at any moment to forgive, on his own terms, all that apply to him for pardon. God then, has loved the world. And at this moment, let me remind you, my hearers, he loves you. It may be that you are unkind, unjust, rebellious, you trample his laws beneath your feet, and disregard his Word and his will ; yet I tell you in his name, that God loves you, and deeply compassionates your sorrows ; he is willing that you should be happy for ever, and has made provision for that happiness ; for let us next see

The measure of that love which God has shown to mankind. “God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” Do you ask for proof that God loves mankind ? You have it in that beneficent nature that you see around you. Why has God made it to please and delight us ? You have it in the daily events of your lives. Why have you so many comforts ? You have it in the joy you ever have felt, or feel to-day. Who gave you that joy ? God alone, the boundless source of good. But, above all, you have it in this, that for you as a race he has given his only begotten Son. He had but one co-equal, co-eternal Son—but one, his best beloved—and he gave him for you and me. See, is there anything better or greater he could give ? There are things you perhaps, my hearers, would value more ; but let your judgments determine. Is there anything greater or better that God could give ? If he were to grant to you at this moment all the desires of your heart, would the sum total of those blessings be a greater gift than Christ ? For were God to pardon all your sins by one act of amnesty without an atonement ; would that be a greater gift, could he have done just by an act of sovereign munificence—what a just and righteous governor cannot do—give you unconditional pardon ? But if we can imagine it, what would be a greater gift than this ? What would it have cost him to have done that which by one act of his fiat, one act of his volition, he could have accomplished ? And if he could have done it consistently with his attributes it would have been done. But if he had done so, it would have been merely an act of royal munificence, and nothing more. But when he gave his Son, his only begotten Son to death and shame, when he sent forth the Lord Jesus whom he loved beyond all knowledge, to suffer, year after year, increasing anguish of spirit and toil of body here on earth, and then to hang on the cross, as a spectacle of shame to his triumphant enemies, for us, what was the benevolence that must have cost. Of all the proofs that have been given on this earth by mere man, of entire subjection to the will of God, of entire devotedness to his Maker, you would be disposed to select out of all history, that where an affectionate father consented at God’s command to offer up in sacrifice his dearly loved Isaac. But if Abraham manifested great love to God in giving up his Son Isaac whom God had given him ; and when he had reason to expect that God would give him back again, by raising him from the dead, how great a love must that be which God has manifested towards us, in giving up his only Son Jesus, to suffering, and shame, and sorrow, that our guilty souls might go free ? Well might the Apostle say, “Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” There was nothing greater, nothing better, nothing more costly that the Omnipotent Majesty of heaven could give. Weigh this statement and see if it be not strictly true, that there is nothing greater, nothing costlier, nothing better that an omnipotent God could bestow ; and bestowed too upon his enemies, rebels, helpless, exposed to his wrath, under his curse, and deserving eternal

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death. Such was his compassion to men when in this miserable and helpless condition, that rather than they should die under the just sentence of his wrath, as the good and just Governor of the universe, he appointed his own Son to die in their stead. If, my hearers, you ever question the love of God, this ought to silence every doubt, if ever you think harshly of God, this ought to chase away all such unkind feelings. When this glorious fact shall assume that place in your understanding to which it has a right; when it takes possession of your heart, as it ought to take possession of it, then you will never, never, doubt again that "God is love."

But next let us see the design for which God gave this incomparable benefit to man. "God so loved the world, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish." When we learn that those who believe in Christ shall not perish, and that he came that such should not perish, it proves that unless he had come they would have perished. It describes, therefore, the actual desert and the actual condition of us all, unless we were saved by Christ. If he had never visited this earth this word would have actually described our eternal prospect. But "he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." It is an awful thing to perish! If it should happen to any one here it would be an unspeakably awful termination to this limited life. In all circumstances it is an awful thing to perish; and for an immortal soul that cannot die to perish is awful beyond language to describe. To lose all hope, to be deprived of all happiness, to have all affections blighted and lost for ever, to look round the universe and not see a friend, to look on through eternity, and not see a bright moment, to feel the crushing of despair; to look up to God and see his flaming eye looking upon us and cursing us with his endless frown,—this, at least, is meant by perishing. It is an awful thing to perish. I hope no one here will perish. But as surely as Jesus Christ came into the world that you might not perish, you will perish unless you trust in him. As sure as you would have perished in all your helplessness, and in all your guilt, enduring the just consequences of your sins, if he had not come, so surely will you perish now if you reject him. He came that we might not perish, that by the just punishment of our sins, the punishment due to us rendering it perfectly and demonstrably just before all his creatures, that God might welcome the sinner for the sake of one so meritorious; he came that we might not perish; and if we are his we shall not. We are on our way to the judgment seat, where our destinies throughout eternity will be determined, but we need have no fear if we are Christ's, "for God sent him into the world, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." This was the appointment of our father in heaven. It is what his benevolent heart desired and accomplished. It is in the exercise of his providence, too, that we are all gathered here to-day that every one may learn this one fact, that he shall not perish even if he feels the weight of guilt to be overwhelming, if he be among the number of the family of Christ.

But this was not all he intended. It was a great thing to know that our dreadful doom is prevented; and if after a life of mingled joy and sorrow we could creep to a quiet grave, and expire as a lamp expires, and nothing more, even that would be a privilege and a blessing beyond price, and beyond gratitude, not to be miserable when this short prefatory state is passed. But to rise from this condition to a glorious immortality reserved for the sons of God, to know on good grounds that the mind and heart shall be alike perfected for ever, our affections and our friendships completed, our employments adapted to our noblest faculties, and eternity itself not too long to utter all God's praise as our Redeemer—this is a prospect which even here may well compell the most ardent love, and the commencement of a life of devotedness that shall be consummated in perfection alone. Thus then it was the design of God in sending Christ that men should not perish, but have everlasting life; life with all its faculties, life in the presence of our Saviour and Lord, and free from every danger.

But again: the blessing is increased, the wonder augmented: observe on

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what terms this life is to be had. Not by a century of suffering, and self-mortification ; not by the depth of contrition, of tears and self-reproach—answerable to the guilt we have contracted—not so ; this blessing is not by purchase but by trust ; yes, by trust ; every one here who trusts will “not perish, but have eternal life.” This is as sure as that we have souls to be saved, for Christ has said it : Whoever trusts lives ; whoever trusts is glorious ; whoever trusts is wise, and will be the possessor of boundless joy throughout eternity. There is the separating line between us now, and at the day of judgment there will be none other, which marks and makes the great and fearful gulph between the accursed and the blessed. If you trust not you are lost ; yet if you will but trust you are safe, for he has said that “whosoever believeth in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life.” God has not given, and will not give this immense and infinite blessing to the corrupt, who will not acknowledge God’s just rights, will not plead guilty at his bar, for “God resisteth the proud ;” but the humble who are poor in spirit, who own the extent and justice of God’s law, and recollect their obligations, and review with sorrow their offences against God, and see that to make an atonement themselves is impossible, and know that God must be just, and plead guilty to his sentence, and acknowledge that he would be just in condemning them, those are they for whom the Saviour has the blessing of eternal life : not for those who would give themselves the honour of their own salvation, and pass the Redeemer by ; not for them did Christ toil and die, but for those who forsaking every delusive hope, cling to him alone, as the only and all-sufficient Saviour. He did not come to give eternal life to those who keep back from him by their own self-will, proudly resolving to do their own pleasure, come of it what may ; who will still grasp at this world’s idols, however he bids them part with them ; who when they pretend to trust in him for salvation, trust in him for nothing else than a corrupt escape from misery,—not for them did he die, but for those who see that Jesus is a Saviour, and as ruined creatures have placed themselves in his hands, making no terms, and contending against no claims on his part, but giving their will up to him, with all their pride, rebellion, stubbornness, and crime—for them, for them, he came—he came for those who trust.

If you trust, my hearers, you are saved ; but if you trust not, there is nothing on this earth or in heaven that can save you. You are come to that crisis of your being in which you are to choose what you will do. Will you have self-will and ruin ; or will you have Christ and glory ? The alternative is put before you. By the providence of God you have been brought into this Hall to-day, and this matter is put to you as plain as language can make it, or as fact can make it either. The alternative is placed before you, either to trust to Jesus for salvation and be saved, or to refuse to trust him, and take the eternal consequences.

Now when it is said, my hearers, that “whosoever believeth in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life,” it necessarily follows that whosoever believes *not* in him *must* perish. Do you not see that this is the consequence ? Do you not see if we should have perished without him, that now he is come if we are guilty, and refuse to trust him for our salvation, there remains a double condemnation ? “If they escaped not who refused him that speaketh on earth, how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation.” What is the neglect that will plunge us into irremediable ruin ? Remember, my hearers, what it is. Hold it fast, never forget it—it is everything short of accepting the salvation which Christ offers. I ask not what your creed is, I ask not your profession of faith, or the church to which you belong ; I ask not what your morals are, or of your benevolent and amiable life ; I ask not whether you belong to Christ’s school, whether you are zealous in promoting his cause and upholding his honour in the world—you may do all this, and yet fail personally to accept him as your great salvation ; never make a full surrender of your soul to him, saying as Peter did, when he was walking on the sea, “Lord, save, or I perish.” If you say this with a sincere and contrite heart, you are safe for eternity.

Do you say, my hearers, that faith is a matter of conviction, and that con-

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viction rests upon evidence, and that unless you have evidence enough you cannot believe ; and that therefore belief is not a matter for which you can justly be blamed or praised, condemned or saved ; but that you would believe if you had sufficient grounds for your faith to rest upon ? Now let me answer two things to this ; I pray you do not forget them, if there be one or many here who need it, do not let it pass, because the happiness or ruin of so many depend upon this, that to-day though conviction is rooted in their minds, to-morrow worldly thoughts sweep it away, and the next day the old refuted errors rise up again as Satan's delusions to cheat men to their everlasting ruin. I would therefore have you remember these things which I shall now answer to the objection which I have stated as being advanced by many as an excuse for neglecting the gospel, and the salvation of their souls. First, if it be as true as it is false that you would believe if you could, but that there is not sufficient evidence for you to believe it ; your position is by no means improved, for you deserve the wrath of God, you have broken his laws, your nature is corrupt and unfitted for heaven, and incapable of the bliss of eternity. God, as your Maker and your Judge, ought and must condemn you unless an atonement is made. Now if there is no proof of that atonement, and if there is no evidence that can make you believe in a Saviour, why then you are in a state of helpless irremediable ruin. I doubt not that many of those who lived before the flood said, that they could not believe the truth which Noah proclaimed to them, because they had not sufficient evidence, and that they said, give us proof, and we will believe you. But their ruin did not depend upon their being able to believe or not. They were guilty and therefore destruction came. Let this idea of the sceptic be urged to prove that there is no Saviour, and the only effect would be to sentence us to despair. Unbelief, therefore, will not mend your case.

But I ask you again, my hearers, who say that you cannot believe, is it true that you have taken the obvious means to remove your unbelief. Let me indicate some of them ; and I know that if you are an unbeliever in Christ you have never taken them. Have you acknowledged the just claims of God ? Have you as a ruined sinner before God felt what it is to be condemned by his law, and been humbled before God under a sense of your sin ? Have you studied the scriptures with prayer ? Have you looked at the moral character of God, and then at the moral character of his salvation, in which you will see that the one explains and answers to the other ? Have you looked at the proofs that the Lord Jesus did live and die for sinners ? And have you put away from you those things that necessarily produce a corrupt mind ? Have you put away all companions who would banter and jeer at religion ? Have you put away those books which steal the heart to a reception of evidence and seek to make you believe that religion is a lie ? Have you put away the habits of sin that warp and destroy your judgment ? If you have not done these things, remember that you are answerable to God for bringing and keeping your mind in such a state as effectively prevents the influence of honest evidences upon it, such evidences as many others have been convinced by, and which would have been enough for you, too, if you had not steeled your heart and conscience against it. Remember, then, that if you believe not the evidence that Jesus Christ is the Saviour of men, the fault rests with you, the cause comes from yourself, and not from a lack of information which God has given.

But do you say, my hearers—for men are so remarkably anxious to prove that they ought to be wretched—how can I believe unless God gives me his grace ? From the passage that you read to-day, you may say, we learn that “ Except a man be born again,” born of the Spirit, “ he cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven;” that is the kingdom of grace, and is not faith declared again and again to be “ the gift of God.”—“ By grace ye are saved through faith, and that not of yourselves ; it is the gift of God.” How then can I have faith, how can I believe unless God gives it to me ; unless my heart is changed by grace ; unless God, as a sovereign, bestows his gifts and blesses me and change my heart ; Here, again, I beg you to bear in mind two things, and to act upon them : do not forget them, for perhaps, your eternal welfare de-

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pends upon them. In the first place, if this be wholly true, as you now allege it to be, perhaps without fully intending it—if it be wholly true—and I am not prepared to deny it—then it only fastens a double guilt upon your soul. It only shows the case to be more discreditable and deplorable than I have stated it to be; for why is it that you need this aid from above? because the heart is so corrupt that no evidence can enlighten the judgment, and no appliance can rouse the conscience; and no proof can act upon a corrupt heart, and, therefore, you cannot believe. Why is it you do not trust the Saviour, presuming, as I have already shown, that there is evidence enough to satisfy any impartial, honest inquirer—why do you not trust in Christ? You are too proud to trust him: you do not love a religion that puts you down and compels you to own your ruin. You cannot trust in Christ, because you are too frivolous to think; you cannot bring your minds to the investigation of the truth of Christianity, because you are too frivolous. The fear of man is another snare that brings you under condemnation: you are afraid of your neighbours and friends; or, perhaps, you reflect what it will cost you; and there is some sin that you cannot part with? This, then, completes your corruption and guilt, and renders you still more deplorable and ruined. You cannot allege to yourselves any reasons that do not involve you in worse condemnation; and show you that whatever may be true in this matter, whether you can or cannot believe, still you remain in the same ruined and deplorable state unless you come and exercise faith in the Redeemer, whom God sent into the world, “that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life.”

But is the plea true, in the sense that you use it, that you cannot believe, that you are so helpless that you cannot believe? In a sense it is true, because faith is the gift of God, and he must originate it. But is it true in the sense you use it, that you are helpless and can do nothing? It is utterly false. At least you have no right to say it is true, unless you seek to use the means that are within your reach. There are three things that any man can do with a view to obtain faith. I suppose, in the first place, he can remove from him those objects and habits which render trust, in any doctrine or system, religious or other, impossible. You must, then, remove these sinful objects and habits which prejudice you against Jesus and his commission and prevent your belief in him as a Saviour. Have you done that? I fear not.

Secondly, “Faith comes by hearing.” We must be taught to believe in every doctrine, moral, scientific, political, or religious—for the same character marks them all—by a careful, thoughtful, sincere, inquiry into the proofs of its truth. Have you done this? “Faith cometh by hearing.” Some men will denounce the gospel because it speaks to their conscience as well as to their understanding. Is it your habit to listen to that preaching which is most likely to do you good; to bring down the pride of your hearts and make you honest before God? Do you seek to obtain the experience of the children of God? Have you done these things and such things as these? If not, you have no right to say there is nothing which you can do. All these things God would have you do, and he will assist you. I pray you, remember, that it is by truth the Holy Spirit acts: he does not accomplish his great purposes without the use of means. “Of his own will,” says the apostle, “begat he us by the word of truth.” If you use the various means within your reach, the Holy Spirit will be present to bless them to the enlightening and sanctifying of your mind and the controlling of your will. If you had been among the bitten Israelites, would you not have adopted every means within your reach to obtain a glance at the brazen serpent; and will you not do that for your soul, which you would doubtless have done for your body? Will you not look to Christ to-day; and ever after keep your eyes fixed upon the Son of God, who shed his blood for you, and stands ready to save you? That you may understand and love him, ask for the Holy Spirit, and give yourselves up to his service, and live for his glory; and so shall you be saved by his grace.

But let me remind you, in the last place, that as certainly as the want of

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faith is ruinous, so the possession of faith is saving. Whatever else you lack if you have faith, the passage declares that you are saved; because they who possess faith have joined thereunto love, holiness, obedience, kindness, and spirituality of mind—and all the fruits of the Spirit will follow this exercise of faith in Christ. But never suppose they precede it. Some persons seem to think that they must possess that which will recommend them to God. Their language is, "we cannot obtain pardon as we are; we have not love enough to God to be saved, not holiness enough to be accepted, not obedience enough to be welcomed by him." If these things be absent, come to the Lord Jesus Christ that you may receive them all. They are not to be the terms on which you believe, but you must come and receive them from him who is ever ready to help our infirmities. Holiness, sanctification, and meekness for glory will arise out of that faith which brings you to Christ. Jesus Christ says, "Come, and ye shall live." Believe these words; believe them thoroughly, hold them fast, act upon them, and you will be happy for ever. If you, my hearers, will trust him, now you may be happy here, and look forward to a bright and joyful futurity in glory; for God so loved the world as to give his only begotten Son for rebel man, that he might not perish but have eternal life. May he who has set before us this blessed truth carry it to all our hearts, so that none of us may go hence, miserably turning our backs upon the only salvation which is offered to us; but receive and love it, and enjoy its comforts for ever.

May you and I, my dear hearers, be found at the right hand of our Judge on the great day of his appearing. Amen.

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The following Nos. of the Penny Pulpit contain Sermons delivered at Exeter Hall.
1,700, The Great Exhibition, by the Rev. T. Binney.
1,701, The Gift of God, by the Hon. and Rev. B. W. Noel, M.A.
1,705, The Prodigal's Return, by the Rev. W. Brock.
1,706, The City of Refuge, by the Rev. J. Beaumont, M.D.
1,710, The Truth, by the Rev. J. Aldis.
1,711, Wisdom's Invitation, by the Rev. G. Smith.
1,713, Looking to Christ, by the Rev. J. Hamilton, D.D.
1,714, Why will ye die? by the Rev. J. Stoughton.
1,717, The Gospel, by the Rev. Luke Tyerman.
1,718, The Testimonies of God, by the Rev. T. Archer, D.D.
1,720—21, The Book for all Nations, and all Times, by the Rev. J. C. Miller.
1,724, Salvation, by the Rev. G. Clayton.
1,725, The difficulties of speculative Inquiry, by the Rev. J. H. Hinton, A.M.
1,728, The Final Judgment, by the Rev. John Burnet.
1,729, The Desire of all Nations, by the Rev. W. Cooke, D.D.
(To be continued.)

THE FINAL JUDGMENT.

A SERMON

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY EVENING, JUNE 15, 1851,

BY THE REV. JOHN BURNET,

AT EXETER HALL.

"Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device. And the times of this ignorance God winked at, but now commandeth all men every where to repent: because he hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead."—Acts xvii. 29—31.

The first among the states of ancient Greece was Athens, distinguished by the great names with which its history is adorned, as well as by its progress in the Arts, and the prowess of its Arms. But there was one thing that characterized it which threw a cloud of obscurity over all its grandeur and over all its greatness—it was wholly given to idolatry. That city was visited by the Apostle Paul, and thither he carried the testimony of the gospel of Christ, boldly proclaiming that testimony in the midst of the idolatry with which he was surrounded. Hence, in drawing his address to the Athenians to a close, he employs the words that I have just read, and reminds these pretenders to wisdom that as they were the offspring of God, the creatures of his power, they ought not to regard him as like unto gold, or silver, or stone. This was throwing a severe reflection over all the proud statues which he saw surrounding him, representing the thirty thousand god's of Greece; and the sting of the reproof lies in the fact that the very commencement of it is taken from one of their own poets, who has described all men as God's offspring. If this maxim of your poet, as if he had said, be true, and you do not question it, and you have never questioned it, then why do I see around me so many marks of idolatrous forgetfulness of God; so many misrepresentations of his character, of his being, and of his glory? He might naturally inquire, as we may naturally inquire, why the nations of antiquity were so long permitted to lie in the blackness of darkness. The Apostle answers this question when he says, "The times of this ignorance God winked at, but now commandeth all men every where to repent," and he sustains the command by the assurance that God had "appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained, and of this he gives to all men an assurance by raising him from the dead."

Let us, while we look at these words, then, notice the wisdom of God in not interfering with the times of ignorance here referred to. "The times of this ignorance," says the apostle, "God winked at." The phraseology is unhappy: the meaning is, that with the times of this idolatrous ignorance God did not so interfere as to spread throughout the world the discoveries of his attributes which we enjoy under the gospel of Christ. Now let us suppose that at a very early period God had chosen to proclaim the glad tidings of his truth, and to confirm them by the testimony of the death of his only Son. Let us go to a

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period, if you will, even beyond the flood. Let us suppose, that amid the darkness of that world which was covered with violence, the Redeemer actually came. Let us follow the result of his premature manifestation, of his purpose to after ages of the world. We should look back now, and the sceptic would delight to look back now, to this early manifestation of his plan of redemption with confidence that it was nothing more than a part of many idle fables that rose out of those dark ages. There was no literature to furnish evidences that such a plan had been accepted at the early period it had been exhibited. There was no satisfactory means by which there might be conveyed to us the character of this morning, this early, this too early morning of Christianity. Everything would have been questioned; every fact would have been questioned, every doctrine would have been questioned, every rite and ceremony would have been questioned, and the whole would have been regarded as an idle tale. God, however, did not thus early interfere, or we can see another evil that would have arisen out of this early manifestation of the settled purpose of God. Were we to look back to an early period for the manifestation of this purpose, it might be said, if Christianity were to tell upon the circumstances of the world, and lift it up as it has done, that the world would have risen without it. It might be said, this is nothing but an inward movement of intelligible influences; that which you ascribe to Christianity we justly ascribe to philosophy, to learning, to the superior circumstances to which man raised himself. But in the four thousand years that God left the world without this interference, when men had an opportunity of trying every device that men could possibly try; when Paganism tried its schemes and failed, when philosophy laboured in vain, when kingdoms were unable to elevate their masses, and republics that followed in their train were equally in want of success: when tyranny and despotism could not accomplish the world's change and the world's reformation, when liberal principles were equally incompetent to triumph in this great work—when mankind assumed every colour and every hue and society was cast in every mould; and yet, after all, through a period of four thousand years, man was found to have done nothing for his spiritual improvement, and his progress towards the God from whom he was alienated. We can then see the wisdom that thus left the world without this interference, until it had endeavoured to do what it could, and had put forth all its power under every form and circumstance. We see, I say, the wisdom of God in thus not interfering with the times of this ignorance. The sceptic cannot say now that Christianity is a fable belonging to a distant age of the world's history. The sceptic cannot say now that the world would have risen if Christianity had never been heard of. We throw him back on the four thousand years that preceded the "fulness of time," and ask him to point out in any generation, or the whole of that period in any quarter of our world that arose to anything like the destiny obviously intended by the Creator of man, according to the assurance that he has given him. With the times of this ignorance God did not interfere.

But let us look now at the period when God did interfere. The times of this ignorance, we have seen, and the reasons why he did not interfere, and the wisdom of those reasons. What was the state of the world when the Redeemer came? The period of his appearance is called very fitly and expressively, the "fulness of time." Now looking at that period just described, we find a literature spread far and wide; it was the Augustine age of Roman learning; it was the period in which boasting of Roman attainments abounded; it was a period when the investigation of every proposition might be fully made; it was a period which God had prepared by rights and ceremonies in the Jewish church, and by the long train of ancient prophecy. The period was predicted, it had now come; the world was in such a state that it could investigate the claims of the Redeemer. We cannot say the period had dawned when there was little to certify his real character, and no opportunity to examine the fallacy of his pretensions. If they were fallacious, he was placed in the midst of the earth, he belongs not to a remote part of the world, he belongs in the very first instance, and throughout his whole pilgrimage, to the very centre of our world. He is placed in a position which enabled investigation to

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conduct, with all the sternness of even enmity itself, its inquiries. He rises among the Jews, the enemies of his kingdom and of his claims, enemies because they understood not the spiritual character of his kingdom. He is subjected to the scrutiny of priests who hated him, and Pharisees who misrepresented him, and the multitudes who denounced him, and who wagged their heads at his cross, and said, "He saved others, himself he cannot save."

The mode, therefore, of interference with the times of this ignorance, was just as remarkable as the period itself that was selected; so strikingly does Christianity take its stand on the evidence connected with the period of its first announcement, and so clearly does it expose the vanity of any argument that would rest on the perfectability of human nature, without the influence and power of Christianity. Away with the claims of the world's progress, when we look back to four thousand years of toil, and see that they all terminated in a failure. But welcome the glorious discoveries of Christianity, when we see our world begin to breathe something like a moral life, since the glorious gospel of the blessed God was proclaimed by the Redeemer's coming. With the times of this ignorance God did not interfere.

Leaving, however, the reasons for not interfering with the times of that ignorance, and the propriety of interfering at the moment interference took place, and the propriety too connected with the mode of interference when it did take place—let us look now for a little, at what God has commanded since he has thus interfered. "With the times of this ignorance God did not interfere, but now he commandeth all men everywhere to repent." The hour, as if he had said, is come; the hour was come when the purposes of heaven were to be made known to the inhabitants of earth—the hour was come when the Son of God was himself to appear and to suffer—the hour was come that prophecy had anticipated, and that Jewish ceremonies had typified—the hour was come which kings and righteous men of old, longed for, but did not see—the hour was come to which angels looked forward, and into which they desire to look still—the hour was come when the moral element was first to be known upon earth, which was to remodel the social world, and to spread far and wide a knowledge of its great Creator, and the influence and power of his spiritual dominion—that time was now come, and therefore the dispensations of God assumed a new character; hitherto a nation had been selected, and through that nation we received the Oracles of God; now, however, that a nation is no longer needed, for the reasons I have just mentioned, and now that God intended to enlarge his kingdom to the utmost ends of the earth, and receive and embrace all nations, he issues the command like a universal Sovereign as he is, and that command is, that all men everywhere shall repent. Now the tabernacle was taken down, now the days of the temple were ended, now the rites and ceremonies of the law were to close, now the basis of Christian evidence was found to be sufficiently broad, sufficiently clear, and sufficiently strong, and therefore says the source of all authority, let the mandate of the King of heaven go forth—let all men everywhere repent.

Now what are we to understand by repentance? This is an important duty rising out of the very important discoveries which we have been considering, and which were made at this very important time. What is the duty here enjoined? Perhaps, on few things connected with the gospel mistakes will be found more frequently to prevail than upon this very subject, repentance. Repentance is not merely a regret that we have offended because we anticipate the consequences of our offence. Repentance of this description only waits to see the danger of the crime committed removed, to return to that crime again. Repentance is not mere change of opinion, from the conviction that Christianity is not true, or as rebels to the conviction that it is true, or that it is valuable. If repentance therefore is not merely regret for sin because we feel that it exposes us to penalty; and if repentance is not merely a change of opinion, what then are we to consider it to be? It is a change of mind. Indeed such is the plain meaning of the original term which we thus render repentance. It is a change of mind that is permanent; it is a change of mind that turns away with a recoil from iniquity, because it has become hateful; it is a change

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of mind that induces the object of it to form a new estimate of the transgressions to which he was formerly attached ; it is change of mind which, while it turns away from sin turns unto God ; it is a change of mind which, loves truth as the object of supreme regard, and lifts the affections to heaven ; it is a change of mind that seeks for new joys and leads to new employments ; it is a change of mind that calls out new affections and rightly directs old affections ; it is a change of mind that places eternity above time and God above man ; the realities of spiritual worship above the outward formalities of profession ; it is a change of mind that accompanies that regeneration by which a sinner is born again. This then is the matter of God's command, this is repentance, and unless this repentance is really rendered, we have the Saviour's assurance that we must all perish. And why do we associate so much that is important with this change of mind ? Just because without it we have no fellowship with our Father who is in heaven. God does not look down upon formal profession, and regard it as something acceptable in his sight, because it is an acknowledgment of him above the gods of gold, of silver, and of stone ; he looks at the heart, he seeth not as man seeth ; man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh at the heart, and requires that his dominion should exist in the hidden man ; he is mocked by external observances only. This repentance, however, not only gives meetness for fellowship with God, but it is the germ of the meetness for heaven, with which all the people of God shall finally be blessed. This repentance, directing the mind to that purity which the gospel requires, gives a fellowship on earth to the followers of the Lord Jesus, which is the prelude to the higher and holier fellowship in heaven. Unless we are like God, we cannot commune with him. The exalted in society, in point of moral tone, can have no sympathy with those who are lost, from the lack of moral influence. They can care for them ; they can seek their reformation ; but that sympathy with them which includes a mutual play of mind with mind, and the mutual working of kind and generous affection, never can exist under such circumstances. It is just so, therefore, with God. The mind must be changed ere it can be made meet for his kingdom. In heaven there are no minds that have been translated from the earth, but changed minds. The spirits that are above, and that have winged their way from the corruptions of earth, are the changed spirits of just men made perfect ; and none can behold God's face in righteousness, but those who have awakened in his likeness. If, therefore, there have not been the operations of this transforming power by which the mind is thus changed ere we can be made meet for the enjoyment of glory, let us meet the command here urged upon us. You may ask, and very properly ask, Can we accomplish this great change ? Is it not God's work ? Why, then, call upon us to perform it ? The commands of God are the very means through which he displays his power. The man that comes unto God in the reception of the truth of his word, feeling that he can do nothing, is in the very path in which the power of God is ready to meet him, and to bless him with all the fulness of Christ. It is through the medium, therefore, of these means that God displays his power. But turn away from the means. Take the indifference which will lead you away from the path where God is to be met, and you are turning away from him, and you are casting away from you the means he has employed, and by which he intends to meet you. We speak the word to you not because we can do anything in it, but because it is the power and the wis-

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dom of God unto salvation. It was not that Paul could create himself again that he was made meet for the ministry of the gospel. It was because Jesus came down from heaven, and stayed him in his wild career, and made him an instrument, and sent him forth to the Gentiles that he might testify of his Master. Let us, therefore, be found in the use of the means, and if I am called to repent, let me feel that this is a divine order. Let me feel that I cannot neglect it, but at the peril of my everlasting safety, and whilst my mind is thus influenced, the spirit of glory and of God can give it that quickening thus created by his own inspired life, and that efficacy and triumph over all resistance which will present me a new creature in Jesus Christ. Thus it is that all men everywhere are called upon to repent.

But by what consideration is this call to repentance enforced in the words before us? Because we are told that "God hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained." Here is the reason of God's interfering with the times of this ignorance. Here is the reason why he calls upon all men everywhere to repent. He has set apart a day, and he has set apart that day from eternity itself; for the kingdom prepared for God's people was prepared for them, as we are told, before the foundation of the world. It was prepared for them in the mind of God. It was his determination from eternity, and the day that was to put them into possession of that glory thus prepared for them, was fixed in the Divine mind. This day, therefore, is an ordinance of God. He hath appointed a day. We do not for a moment, profess to know the period of that day. There are no means by which it can be known, but we know the certainty of its arrival. The appointment of a day for this mighty purpose, the judgment of the world, is a most important feature in the purposes of God. Why does God intend to judge the world? Does not every man go to his own place when death overtakes him? It is not therefore, to fix the destiny of man that that day is appointed. Is it to give information to God himself? Does he require any of the siftings of things and evidence, and of character connected with the judgments of man upon the earth? No. Why then is that day appointed? It is appointed for the express purpose, of furnishing before an assembled universe, an opportunity to its great Judge to vindicate the character of all his proceedings since the world began. Until that period shall have come, no meeting of the whole human race will be found ever to have taken place. We pass away one after another, and generation after generation, to our own home, and to our final doom. But there is no assemblage of the great multitudes removed from time to time. There never has been such an assemblage—there never will be such an assemblage until the day which our text tells us God hath appointed.

Then, my friends, it will appear manifest to all, for all are to be assembled, it will appear manifest to all at the same moment, that God is just in condemning the ungodly, and righteous in saving his people. What an awful impression must be produced when the greatest assemblage that time or immortality can ever behold, shall be presented as waiting for judgment. Assemblages there may be—assemblages there will be. In heaven the angels of God are great in number, as well as great in intellect and great in power. There will be a vast assemblage we know, from the assurance of the word of God, even in hell. But then these assemblages will be separate assemblages. And when we reflect that the angels of light, and of darkness shall be assembled too, at this day of judgment—for it is a day of the judgment of

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angels as well as of men—every mortal being in the universe will then have his interest in, and be a spectator of the proceedings of this highest of all tribunals. My friends, every one of us must be there. Every eye shall see him, even they who pierced him. He shall come in the clouds of heaven, with power and with great glory. The day has arrived, let us say, and we occupy our places. We have risen from our graves. The human race comes forward to hear the last intimation of the Great Creator made to the lost, and the beginning of assurance, and kindness, and glory, to the saved. All the inhabitants of the nations of the earth—all the armies that ever traversed it—all the fleets that ever covered its waters—all the kings that ever ruled its destinies—all the slaves that ever served the despots that ruled them—all the masters that ever crushed and oppressed the slave—all that have been interested in the world's bustle and the world's commerce—all that have been involved in, and too many of them have been involved, in the world's politics to the neglect of the great things of God—the rich and the poor will be found there—the father and the mother—the children—the sisters—the brothers. The relations of life have become mere matters of history, and they have passed away into the recollections of days which are gone by, never to return; and each stands like an independent spectator of the everlasting God, who presides in supreme justice and supreme power, over the vast masses of the human race. The ordination of God at the head of this great assize shall be clothed with the full authority of the Lord Jesus Christ as the highest. He hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained. None but God would be competent to the decisions of such a day as this. Omniscience must see at once the hearts of all. Each will be found to take his place according to the power that presides over that assembly, just as the sheep and the goats will take their places under the guidance of the shepherd on the right hand and on the left. There may be, and there will be, weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth, but no resistance to the mighty Power that shall give every one according to his character, and according to his deeds. Aye, my friends, what a day must that be;—the people of God raised incorruptible and formed into a glorified resemblance to the Son of God, with all the new feelings associated with their glorified condition—the enemies of God raised with all the feelings of earth—all its apprehensions—all its fears—all its susceptibility of terror—and this will then be regarded as a real lack—and yet those persons thus raised, will be quite incapable of being annihilated by the terrors of the Lord that will set in upon them on that day. They may call to the mountains and to the hills to fall upon them and to cover them from the wrath of the Lamb, and of him that sitteth upon the throne; but the call will be in vain. They were made for immortality, and they are immortal, and that which would have destroyed by the measure of its terror the inhabitants of the earth, whilst they were upon the earth—that which shook Mount Sinai, and that which made Moses himself say, “I exceedingly fear and quake,” will be found to be far out-done in power and attainment on this great occasion, and yet there will be found possession of immortality to endure, whilst the ungodly possess not meetness to enjoy it. How different the position of the people of God! My friends, am I describing any visions, or am I looking at the word of God, and deriving from its essence the statement I am now making? Are we to share in the affairs of this great day? We dread this not, when we look at him who is to judge. But we are not shut up to

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consider the Redeemer as a Judge acceptable to us, because he has become our Father, our Parent, and our Great Head, if we have received him, we are thrown upon further ground. "God hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world, by that man whom he hath ordained;" but he has appointed a day in which he shall judge the world "in righteousness," as our text tells us. Say not then, God is too merciful to punish. This righteousness, this justice call for punishment when crime is persevered in to the last. Would that be a righteous God who, in the exercise of his mercy, so called, could pass by all moral deformity that had marred the subjects of his government upon his footstool? Give us the assurance that God is too merciful to be just, and you have taken down all the limits within which we feel the full measure of our obligations to walk in the fear of the Lord and in the keeping of his commandments. You have given us then to understand that whatever may be our character, we have nothing to dread, for he is a God of mercy, who has our justice, and who, in the exercise of mercy, will sacrifice the justice that constitutes his glory. You cannot take this view of God. Your conscience will not allow you. Such a being would be a weak sovereign of the universe, and with God, weakness is impossible. He will judge the world, therefore, in righteousness, unswayed by the measure of suffering that may be inflicted, and unswayed by the relations of those who are the objects of his displeasure. We must vindicate his justice, while at the same time, he makes manifest his mercy. But his mercy is extended to his own people. He had forewarned you of this. There can be no reason of complaint then; and, let me add, from what we have stated, as to the objects of the judgment day, there will be no disposition to complain, suffering, awful, and lasting as it may be, will never disturb the conviction in the minds of the sufferers that God has been just, and that they have destroyed themselves.

If, therefore, the world is thus to be judged by the Redeemer, and to be judged in righteousness, we may ask again, is there any proof that these awful things shall come to pass?

The passage tells us, that the proof is, the resurrection of Christ. God has given assurance that the Redeemer shall judge the world in righteousness, in his resurrection from the dead. Then all the evidences that tell upon the truth of the Saviour's resurrection will be found also to tell on the reality of the coming judgment; all the evidences that gather around the raised person of the Lord of glory, are evidences gathering around the ordination of God that every man living shall bow before the judgment and decision of the Saviour. When we look at the resurrection of Christ—when we look to this very day that commemorates that great event—we are looking at the same time to the assurance that God has given that the Saviour shall judge the world.

Then, my friends, look at the wisdom with which God has waited till the world has tried its strength, and that strength has proved weakness—look to the fulness of time when the Redeemer came, and the investigation to which his claims were subjected—look at the command that has been given in consequence of the Saviour's coming, to every one to repent—look at the inducements to meet this command presented in the awful gathering of the day of judgment, and the settled doom that shall then follow with regard to everything that lives—look to the Saviour himself, as the Judge on this great occasion, and the righteousness with which he will wield the sceptre that shall fix the condition of all men, and of all creatures—look to the resurrection from the

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dead, which presents to you the Redeemer, who, as he had power over death, and thus took up again the life that he had voluntarily laid down, is employing that life in the world's government, and at the same time holding forth to you his own testimony when he intercedes on his own merits at the right hand of his Father's throne; and is it possible that you can neglect his great salvation? My friends, we have met together under peculiar circumstances, but this every circumstance would suggest to us the ideas we have just been throwing out. We are a gathering from various quarters, and it may be, that more than the inhabitants of one nation will be found to be present in this assembly. We are relieved from all formality and from the ordinary course of religious services, and we come here as earnest men to inquire what we are to do, and what we are to teach. I like the occasion. I like the circumstances connected with it. I like to hear of the crowds that have assembled to listen to the record of truth, and like to see the vast mass now before me, notwithstanding the condition of the weather; and, I think, I may regard all this as auguring well for the future circumstances of those who have assembled. We have met on earth, and we have met in harmonious assembly. Shall we meet at the last day—the day of judgment—to be separated? We have met in full congregation below—shall we be shut out from a fuller congregation above? We have met to look to the wisdom with which God has approached our world and revealed his Son in it. Shall it be found at last, that we have, notwithstanding this, disregarded that wisdom, and that we have committed the folly of casting away our own souls? "What is a man profited if he should gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" Let us not forget the scene which the text brings before us. These heavens shall be on fire—this earth shall be dissolved with fervent heat. There shall then be no more assemblages like the one now before me, nor shall there be any more interesting subjects which now occupy so much public attention in connection with the materials of our world. The earth with all its works shall be burned up—the world shall pass away, and the fashion thereof. Let this introduction to one another—let this opportunity of applying ourselves to the contemplation of the judgment day, lay the basis of an eternal friendship—a friendship begun on earth—a friendship to be consummated in heaven—a friendship begun in time—a friendship terminating in immortality. Let us commit ourselves, therefore to our Father who is in heaven. Let us accept the testimony he has revealed. Let us go hence looking to God for his protecting care, looking for his guiding wisdom, looking for the influence of his Spirit, looking for the grace supplied by his Word; until at last, the anticipated judgment day which awaits us, shall be a day of joy when it actually comes, and if the wicked cannot be destroyed by its terrors, neither shall the righteous be found to be appalled by its glory, and we shall be ready to enter into our Master's joy. May this be the case with us all. God grant it for his mercy's sake.

THE DESIRE OF ALL NATIONS.

A Lecture

DELIVERED ON TUESDAY EVENING, JUNE 17, 1851,
BY THE REV. W. COOKE, D.D.
AT EXETER HALL.

Before the Young Men's Christian Association.

THE GREAT EXHIBITION.

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1,637, The Redeemer our Judge. John v. 22,
1,643, Irresistible Grace. Luke xii. 35—37.

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1,564, Rev. Thomas P. Dale, M.A., The Fountain of Life. Psalm. xxxvi. 9.
1,565, Rev. Thomas P. Dale, M.A., The State of the Departed. Isaiah lvii. 2.
1,572, Rev. M. Anderson, Instability. Gen. xlix. 4.

THE DESIRE OF ALL NATIONS.

A Lecture

DELIVERED ON TUESDAY EVENING, JUNE 17, 1851,

BY THE REV. W. COOKE, D.D.

(Of Belfast.)

AT EXETER HALL,

Before the Young Men's Christian Association.

THERE are three objects of bodily desire, common and universal: what we shall eat, what we shall drink, and wherewithal we shall be clothed. "After these things," saith the Lord, "the Gentiles seek." And we have here a common centre of attraction, around which all men necessarily congregate, and consequently, in one sense of the word, speaking of these three objects, we might pronounce them "the desire of all nations." But you must observe with regard to them, that nothing is more common than for men to fall into most grievous and palpable mistakes, that these things not followed according to the original design, but, followed according to man's errors, may terminate in private misery, and public ruin. Hunger, for example, is the necessary desire of food, but man may so pervert that desire as to spend his deepest thoughts on the selections of epicurism, or the abominations of gluttony. Thirst is the desire of drink, but men departing from the original desire of nature may sacrifice reason, and health, and salvation, upon the altar of degrading drunkenness. Raiment is the necessary protection against cold, and heat, and yet the use of it may be perverted to the purpose merely of pride and vanity, and it may be employed to accelerate disease, and to pay in human misery, a premature premium on death. But you will observe that in every instance in which men fall into these palpable mistakes, there is necessarily generated a new desire, the desire of the restoration of health; and in the midst of all the errors into which men fall by the indulgence of those original desires, the physician is able to discover the rules for the restoration of health; these rules are not derived from indulging the pampered appetite, they are not derived from allowing man to follow the habits he has gathered around him; but by the careful observation of the physician, by the actual experiments that he has made, and by the well recorded cases to which he refers, he is enabled to demonstrate that this new desire of health, arising out of the error and mistake of man, is to be realized by returning, as far as may be, to the simple and original end for which it was appointed for us to eat, to drink, and to clothe ourselves. You will perceive then that the following facts are hereby established. First, that the original bodily desires are simple; they are original; they are universal. You will perceive in the second place, that these desires may be perverted as to means, and as to end, and that consequently they may become the cause of much private suffering and public misery; and you will likewise perceive that a new desire is generated by this perversion, that is, the desire of escaping from sickness and pain, and of being restored to comfort through health; and you will perceive the gratification of this new desire after health is to be obtained by a return to the original principles, which, being perverted, brought on the misery under which mankind suffered. Now such being the case with regard to bodily diseases, is it not, even previous to inquiry, most likely that such may be the case with regard to mental diseases? Is it not likely that we may be able to trace the mental diseases of individuals,

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and the mental diseases of all nations to some few simple, original, universal principles? And is it not likely that when we have ascertained those mental diseases, either as they arise in the separate individual, or as they arise in national combinations,—it is not, I say, likely that we may discover that individual and national miseries arise from the perversion of those simple original desires? And is it not likely that when we have discovered the misery that arises from departing from original principles, the desire of all nations for gaining the end for which the original principles were intended, must be put forth in a return to, and a following of those original principles, and that by the following out of those principles of the individual, or of the combinations of countries, and peoples, and nations, we will be brought to the great end of all enquiry, Christ, and Christianity: “Christ the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth;” and Christianity, the universal remedy that God has provided for the desires of all nations. Now with regard to the personal desires of men, before we come to consider the corporate desires of nations, allow me to attempt to lay before you the briefest possible outline in a few specimens. It cannot be supposed that in the course of a brief lecture I should attempt to overtake the discussion of all the original mental desires of an individual man; neither would it be desirable did time permit. My simple object here is to prepare for discussing the desires of all nations, by laying before you a few specimens of the original desires of all individuals; and throughout, my argument shall be this, that if I am able to show you that we find in every man a number of simple original desires, and if we find, in fact in every man, that those desires are by human effort never realized, and, if I am able to show you that by embracing Christ and Christianity, these desires are uniformly realized; then I shall, through the grace of God, have established that proposition which it is my object to lay before you,—to wit, that Christ and Christianity constitute the real sum and substance of the desire of all nations; and that when the individual seeks after his desires, or when the nation seeks after its desires, without seeking Christ, they are pursuing the shadow, they are pursuing the mere form; but, that, when the individual embraces Christ, when the nation embraces Christianity, they then embrace the substance, and the reality. Now I believe I may state that as the first individual desire of man we may rank the desire of property. Beyond all question, whether it be an original principle, or an acquired one, it is one that early appears even in childhood. Now let man pursue the desire of property with what zeal he may, and what success Divine Providence may please to lay upon him, there comes an hour when that property availeth him nothing. Like Haman there is always a Mordecai sitting at the king’s gate, and all that he has attained, all that he has gathered, all that he has grasped, and all that he calls his own, literally availeth him nothing: a grave, a shroud, a coffin, and a tomb, is all that he can obtain; and of these now he knoweth nothing. Let man then follow out the desire of property and terminate there, and he has gained nothing. Let him, with the apostle Paul, desire to be found not having his own righteousness which is of the law, but let him desire to win Christ, and be found in him, and then the desire that originally was for the fleeting property of this world will be carried to the laying hold upon Christ and his imperishable, and his indestructable righteousness, unsearchable in their amount; the man is then fully satisfied, and what was originally the desire of a fading, and of a departing cloud of property, becomes an eternal and indestructible inheritance.

Now in the second place, there is another desire inherent in every man; whether again I say it be original, or whether it be acquired, it is of no consequence to me to attempt to ascertain; but of this one thing I am certain, that it is a desire found in every living man—I mean the desire of education. I do not say that every living man desires the education of literature; I do not say that every living man desires the education of the Bible; I do not say that every living man desires the education of principle; but every living man desires the education of knowing more than he knows now; and whether you take the best of men, or whether you take the worst of men, there is always

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inherent in the human mind an indestructible desire of knowing more. Now, let man be instructed in all that literature and science can bring before him, be instructed in all to which habit can inure him ; and if the man be instructed even in the principles of the ethics of this world, still there is something that he requires more ; he requires to know God and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent ; and without this knowledge that belongs to immortality, and without this knowledge that conducts to glory, all previous education is utterly in vain. But though a man should be denied all the ordinary education of literature ; though, because of infirmity, he were incompetent to the education of habit ; yet, if the man through the grace of God, receive the education of the knowledge of God, and the principles of salvation, that man following up the original desire of education, has terminated in Christ the desire of all nations ; and he now knows more than the wise men of the world know, for he knows the way of salvation, and he can read and recognize the charter of his own glory. Enter ye in if ye will, where the learned of the world assemble, where the most learned combination of men, the British Association, meet together—put to them any question of geology, and they can descend, as it were, to the earth's centre, and tell you of all its constituents ; they can read the records of ancient times, and unfold the rocky volumes of the mountains. Ask them of astronomy, point them to the comet, and ask them when it will return : the astronomer mounts the car of light, he enters into his calculations, and while the stranger of the heavens has gone into distances that render him to us invisible, the astronomer by his calculations has followed him, and he returns and tells you how, when years have past, the strange visitant of the heavens will smile upon you again. But enter into that Association, and ask them this one thing,—“How could you take away a sin?” Ask them this one thing,—“How could you save a sinner?” and take from them the Bible out of which that information alone can come—remove Christ from whom alone that salvation can come—as it is the taking away of sin, and, and as it is the communication of Christ and righteousness,—that combination of learned men would be as silent as children who had not yet learned their mother tongue. Those then that follow this original desire of the individual man after education, and follow it out to its complete end, have realized the “desire of all nations,” in the completeness of that education which terminates in the knowledge of God and of salvation.

Now, thirdly, there is another universal desire that every man feels—to stand well with himself, to be able to enjoy the approbation of his own mind touching all that he thinks, and says, and does. Think an evil thought, and you enjoy not your own approbation ; speak an evil word, and you enjoy not your own approbation ; because, every man desires to stand well in his own self-esteem. Let man follow out this principle without Christ and without Christianity, and at every forth-putting of the desire the man is disappointed. Paul was disappointed when he was enlightened ; he was alive without the law once, but when the law came, sin revived, and he died, and then, instead of standing high in his own self-esteem, he was compelled to say, “to will is present with me, but how to do good I find not ;” and his last exclamation was : “O wretched man that I am!” But then arose the desire and the gratification of the desire : “I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

I need not urge upon you, in the next place, that the desire of the esteem of others in like manner is an essential, and an original principle of our intellectual constitution. The proud man indeed may despise the influence of some, but the proudest man cannot despise the influence of all. The good man may rise superior to the opinion of the world, but every man will desire, as far as is consistent with conscience, to obtain the good opinion of those around him. It is a desire essential to our nature, and even essential as a stimulant to our well-doing ; but it never can be obtained without Christ, for although you purchase the good opinion of the world up to one point, when men come to die, and when they come to judgment, and when they send their aspirations to the upper world from the misery of the lower, then those who enjoy the temporary and good opinion of sinners have lost it for ever. The rich man

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when he lifted up his eyes being in torment, and when he saw Abraham afar off, desired a messenger from the dead to go and tell his brethren, lest they should come into that torment. No doubt he enjoyed their good will while they feasted with him in purple and fine linen, and rejoiced with him every day. But now he perceives that there is a want that cannot be filled up, and his object is to send a missionary from the invisible world, and he longs for a mission even from the state of the condemned, that he may not underlie the condemnation of their condemnation in addition to his own. But no man will ever attain to this desire of the good opinion of others, that opinion which is carried into eternity, until he realizes Christ and Christianity.

I need not speak, in the next place, of the desire that every man feels, to have influence over others. It is enough to say there is no evidence of omnipotence over man belonging to man, but in two exhibitions,—truth and love. By truth you gain the influence of that God who revealed the truth, over the understanding of man; and by love you gain the influence of the power of the God of love over the affections of man; and those who pursue the real desire of influence over others up to the point of teaching them truth, and influencing them by love, they alone do realize the fact, that to the individual man Christ is the desire of his inmost soul.

The last individual desire that I shall state is this—that every living man desires to stand free from the contingencies of the world. This is a world of which it is truly said, we know not what a day may bring forth. The most uncertain climate is not more uncertain than the world around us. Nay when the sun is red at setting, and when the morning is red and lowering we may foretel with considerable probability what will be the state of the weather to-day or to-morrow. But such is the fickleness of the human mind, so opposing are the interests of man, and so weak are the bonds whereby they are held together, that the work of every man is to guard against the contingencies of a future hour. And is man able to guard against contingencies? The man who limits his desire by anything on this side Christ and Christianity, whatever may be his means, is utterly unable to guard against a single contingency. Take, for example, the instance in which an empire is to be sacked; the instance in which a dynasty is to be established and a race of mighty monarchs to be perpetuated. In order to the attainment of all this, and to guard against the contingencies of disappointment, affection is to be sacrificed, a wife is to be divorced, and the blood of the man of yesterday is to be commingled with the blood of the monarchs for centuries; and the work is consummated, and the cradled babe is hailed, by the city, perhaps in derision called eternal, as the representatives of her consuls and her Cæsars; and millions of her children of uninterrupted victory stand round to guarantee the matter against any contingency. But in a moment the bubble bursts; in a moment the phantom disappears; and “like the baseless fabric of a vision, leaves not a wrack behind.” And this is not with the great alone; this is not the event of an emperor alone; this is every man, be he high or low; this is every man, be his horizon wide or narrow; this is every man, be his object noble or ignoble—man labouring to guard against contingencies; let him lay hold on Christ and Christianity—then contingencies are come to an end. In the purpose of the Saviour there is neither variableness nor the shadow of turning; in the tide of his love there is no ebb; in the arm of his power there is no weakness; and in the promise which he has made there is no disappointment; but the man stands above every contingency of the world, and realizes this fact, that “neither life nor death, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate him from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

I have thus endeavoured to lay before you an outline of the individual desires of men; and I have endeavoured to show you that in those individual desires you have this fact proved, that man can never realize one of them; but that these desires, if each followed out, or combinedly followed out, would lead to the reality of Christ and Christianity, and that then every one of them is fully realized. And I would now endeavour to lead you to an examination of

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the desires of corporate bodies in their most extensive sense, nations, the empires and monarchies of the world. In this respect, then, let me remind you that there must be some difference in the desire of nations and the desire of individuals, because there are new combinations, there are new relations, there are new duties, there are new powers.

The first principle, I believe, of the desire of all nations is, the formation and administration of law—law lying in justice, equity, and mercy. Wherever man has been found, wherever civilization has made any progress, we find law. Whether the desire of law, that is, justice, equity, and mercy, on fixed principles, be a primary truth requiring no evidence, or whether it be a matter that arises from experience, it is not necessary that we should inquire. We see the authority of a father acknowledged and established; we see the obedience of a child admitted to be a duty; and we see a father restrained by reason and sympathy in the hour of his power; and we see every child convinced in its obedience that justice, equity, and mercy, are the birthright to which it is entitled. But all nations, we are certain, in proportion, to their civilization, have been engaged in the formation of law; and the great object of nations is to get down to original principles, to throw off those accretions to original principles by which they are believed to be injured or to be perverted. There is no sort of question in the world that a large amount of the world's legislation has always been for classes rather than communities; and whenever this is the case, whatever may be the amount of human power by which human desire for law—that is, justice, equity, and mercy—is restrained, still the desire slumbers in the human bosom under all the oppressive burdens that may be laid upon it; and in due time will stain with blood the annals of rebellion and revolution, in the light of some great principle—will throw off the obsolete and injurious law of past times, and as it were, a new generation and a new era will march forth under the spirit of law. But let nations legislate as they will, nations will never legislate in the fulness of justice and equity and mercy; until they adopt the principles of Christ and Christianity. And why? Because Christ alone has adopted the central principle of all legislation, as lying in a faith that acknowledges God, a love that is attached to him, and a love that regards ourself; and because Christ alone has established a relation of man to man upon the eternal principle of a righteous, a holy, and a loving reciprocity. Let nations, when they are labouring for the establishment of law, seize upon these principles, and then that desire of theirs which is the first of all that holds the nation together is realized, and up to that moment it never can be. There is no sort of question can be entertained upon this subject, but that the earnest desire of all nations is thus for the establishment of law.

But the second desire of nations is like unto it. The second desire of nations is for law, as it is the protection of liberty. Within the human bosom the desire of liberty is, as it were, an inherent instinct that never can be destroyed. The plant may be destroyed, but the root is there, and it will grow under every unfavourable condition of time or of climate. Now in this matter of liberty it is well known that no nation has ever fully attained to it. Portions of a nation may attain to it; nay, it may be that the whole nation has attained it in one sense; but no nation under heaven was ever yet persuaded upon human principles that the nation was absolutely free. There will always be found some who believe they have not as much liberty as they should have; and there will always be found others who believe that others have more liberty than that to which they were entitled. Of this fact we may be assured—that no man, no nation, will ever be conscious of enjoying liberty as long as the man or as long as the nation is subject to error, to passion, or to merely human appetite. In order to give freedom to the man, you must give him freedom from his own passions, you must give him freedom of his own conscience, standing over the records of all his thoughts, and words, and actions, and approving them; and consequently, until Christ is found to be the true desire of nations, the desire of the nation is always disappointed. But let a nation embrace Christianity in the power of it, let a nation embrace Christ in the love of him, and then Christ has taught us the principle of self-denial, and Christ has taught us the principle

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of love to our neighbour, Christ has taught us the principle of subduing and repressing our own passions, nay, of "crucifying the flesh with the affections and lusts;" and the blood of Christ has sprinkled the conscience from dead works to serve the living God; and the man who thus is free from selfishness, the man who is free from enmity against his neighbour, and the man who is set free from the accusation of his own conscience, has attained to that legislation which is indeed the desire of all nations.

Now, Thirdly. The next desire of all nations rests in riches, prosperity, the advancement of commerce and of arts. No man, as a mere man, is ever satisfied with what he has ; it requires the power of Christ desired, and Christ embraced to give man this satisfaction. An individual man pursues the moderate attainment of wealth that he may "provide things honest in the sight of all men, that he may provide for the family that God has made dependent upon him, and that he may go forth from them doing good unto all men as the Lord gives him opportunity ; but no nation ever sought after riches upon these principles." A nation is never satisfied ; a nation in its commerce is always seeking for new materials, always seeking for new profits, and always realizing the terrible sarcasm that enough in the mind of men always signifies the obtaining of something more. But Christ the desire of all nations alone realises what the nation seeks ; because if the desire of the nation be great gain, remember that "godliness with contentment is great gain ;" and remember that there is no godliness, no god-likeness, no tendency of the mind toward God, a resting of the heart upon God, but in proportion as the light of Christianity has shone into the heart, and Christ is formed there "the hope of glory."

Now, in the next place. The next desire of all nations arises from an important fact in human history, to wit, that in proportion as a nation advances in commerce, in riches, in arts, and in all that makes a nation great, the uniform tendency of that is to depress large masses of every community. It is a sad, a melancholy fact in the history of prosperous people, that in proportion as a large number prosper, there are others who, some how other, come to be depressed. The consequence is, that when we enter the social edifice, and examine it in all its parts, however glorious may be the vestibule, however splendid many of the apartments into which we enter, when we go further and further, at last we hear the sighings, and the cryings, and the groanings of whole masses of the community. Then we need not be surprised at the fact, when we come to look at and to chronicle their miseries, that their advocates are stimulated with an eloquence almost arising to inspiration when they plead the cause of the masses who are suffering, and when they draw out in terrible details the every-day record of the calamities that they endure. The desire of all nations, then, arises to this point—that they may not merely attain to general visible prosperity, but that they may extend that prosperity to all the masses of the community, and that they may be able to distribute to every man an abundance of this world's enjoyments. Labour as we will, however, will the work be ever completed ? The work will never be completed until we pursue it in the outgoing of the full desire that terminates in Christ. God forbid for a single moment that we should say to any man, "labour not to carry improvement through all the masses of the society." On the contrary, remember this, that Christ and Christianity never stood, and never will stand in the way of external improvement. But a man who expects to realize the desire of all nations in universalizing comfort, will never attain it by merely external workings : he "seeks the living among the dead." To remove crime and misery without changing the inward heart of man, will be found an absolute impossibility. The desire of all nations being, then, to remedy the inconveniences that the masses suffer, let it be sought, not by neglecting external things, but let every man stir himself up with all zeal to do his part of the work ; but let no man think that the work will be done by merely attending to the outward edifice ; we must descend to the foundations of the social pile, and they must be raised upon this great fact, that a renovation of the outward body must be accompanied with a renovation of the inward constitution, and that it is when that renovation of the constitution of society is sought and desired by the

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knowledge of Christ dwelling in every man in the power of holiness and the power of everlasting life, that the desire of all nations is realized in universalizing those improvements, that, while they appear on the outward face of society, very often are only the veils that cover the inward deformity, and misery of the suffering portions of a large community.

The next principle of the desire of all nations arises from the former; it is a desire for the extension of territory. I believe there never was a nation that considered its territory wide enough. From what principle in our nature this covetousness of territory may arise, it is of no importance that we should enquire; our purpose is served when we find that it is one of the original desires of all nations. It may arise from the desire of commerce, it may arise from the superiority of climate, or it may arise from the inward pressure of an over-teeming population, or it may arise from the perverted love of conquest and superiority; still, from whatever cause it arises, the extension of empire is the desire of all nations. Sometimes nations are compelled to extend, and obtain a frontier with peace without, and quiet within; but no nation ever realizes such a desire. The fact is here that aggression provokes aggression. Although power for a time may stand upon the frontier, as the Chinese stood for a time upon his wall, yet the very presence of the wall will provoke the exterior aggression by which it will be passed over, or by which breaches will be made. No religion ever professed to seek universality but the religion of Christ; no law but the law of Christ was ever capable of being made universal; no organization of religion was ever calculated for the whole world, but the religion of Christ. Even the religion of the Jews, though given of God, was calculated for a local religion for the time being; it was a light in the midst of the world, and a world of great darkness, but still it was local and confined. But when we come to the religion of Christ it realizes the desire of all nations, east, and west, north and south, they are all the dominion that the Saviour claims; he comes as the King of every land, the head of all principality and of all power. And whenever you find a nation desiring extension of dominion, while you see an original desire of the nation there, remember it never can be realized until the nation desires the dominion of truth, and love, and faith, in the Lord, and it is by that that we realize Christianity and Christ as the desire of all nations.

Now there is another desire of all nations that arises in the sight of every man, the desire of peace. Even although we find nations apparently educating for war, the education for war is either to secure peace, or finally to conquer, and to hold it. All individuals, however disturbing their principles and their dispositions, would desire sometimes to obtain tranquillity; and all nations, however, warlike, are ever longing for peace. But mark you this - as long as there is selfishness you never can have peace with your neighbour; as long as you want faith you never can have peace with God; and as long as you want love you never can have peace with the world. But when the desire of nations for the obtaining of peace is once realised, then Christ and Christianity are embraced and realized. There is a point here to which I desire to call your attention in passing. It is a fact that, in the mercy of God, while nations are seeking out their own desires, God is pleased, in his providence and by his Spirit, to lead them to Christ. When they are pursuing their own way Christ meets them, as he met Paul, when Paul was pursuing his own desire, on the road to Damascus; and while the nation is seeking its own objects the providence and the mercy of God may meet that nation and bestow upon it, as Christ bestowed upon Paul, not what Paul sought, and so not what the nation sought, but that mercy and that grace which is the real sum and substance of the great and extended national desire. Let me give you a simple illustration of this fact from the well known history of the discovery of other lands. When Columbus, for example, rose as a prophet of nature, to him the form of the globe was well known. He was fully acquainted with the history of the traffic of India; he knew that it had enriched Tyre and Alexandria, and the cities of the Mediterranean. The desire of the infant nations, as they then might be called, of Western Europe was for the traffic of the East; but a strong and unsocial

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Mahomedanism barriered the way of the Mediterranean, while the infallibility and autocracy of Rome barriered the way of the East. But, as one of nature's prophets, Columbus, knowing the form of the world, and said, "In whatever way you navigate upon a sphere, you will arrive in time at the place from which you depart." The desire of the Western nations, you perceive, was to reach the East; the determination of Columbus was to reach it by the West. With all the confidence of a sound philosophy he embarked with his light caravans upon the bosom of the untried Atlantic. During every league he had to battle with ignorance, with obstinacy, and with superstition, until at last the bold heart had nearly quelled amid the waves of the ocean, until the patient spirit was nearly worn out with the cowardice of his crew. But, at last a little floating sea-wreck, telling that the depths of the ocean were passed over, then a plant floating on the waters, and at last a land bird visiting them, as if to welcome the strangers and make its way toward the West, told Columbus that the East Indies were at hand. In a very brief space sunny islands began to emerge from the bosom of the sea; ancient forests crowned the hills; and rivers broad and deep and clear ran through wide and extended and fertile plains; and mountain torrents revealed the mineral riches of gold and silver." Then Columbus said, "the East Indies are gained." An entire continent lay between him and the East Indies; but he gained a better land. He gained a land with mineral treasures as great as man's cupidity; he gained a land with agricultural treasures equal to man's industry; he gained a land for the pilgrim fathers, obeying the word of the Lord, "persecuted in one city, flee to another;" he gained a land that ever continues to afford either the city or the forest home for the teeming population of Europe; and he gained a land that formed a world wide platform upon which the institutions of British liberty, plastically conforming themselves to the conditions of the people, have demonstrated what the power of these institutions can affect, and have exhibited upon the widest stage of the world yet tried united millions strong in power, diligent in learning, labourious in agriculture, skilful in arts, zealous in religion, a people displaying their starry banners upon every sea, in all their splendour and glory; with but one solitary spot at which the finger of an enemy could point with triumph, or on which the eye of a friend could look with sorrow—a solitary spot which the tears of mercy are fast falling to obliterate, and the hand of justice will soon blot out for ever. And thus, I say, it is before us in this instance. Columbus sought the East Indies; he found them not, but he found a better and a nobler land. So in like manner, if we follow out the instincts of those desires of all nations, and the Spirit of God become our guide, we find not the realization of one of the objects that the world has taught; we find not the realization of the world's law, but of the law of Christ; we find not the realization of the world's liberty, but of the liberty wherewith the Son of God makes conscience free; we find not the realization of the world's prosperity, but we find the riches, the unsearchable riches of the Lord Jesus Christ; we find not the realization of pervading all men with equal advantages, but we find the means of raising all men above their disadvantages; we find not the means of universal empire over bodies, but we find the means of working out the universal empire of the Lord Jesus Christ over both the quick and the dead in the salvation of souls; we find not the means of establishing temporal peace, but we find the means of establishing spiritual peace, and are enabled to say, "Justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Lastly, The last desire of all nations is the favour, the blessing, and the acceptance of God. All nations desire these three things: they desire the favour of God; they desire the blessing of God; and they desire the acceptance of God through righteousness. It is a fact beyond all question that a nation of atheists never existed; it is a fact beyond all question that the geography of the world never pointed its finger to one nation that was without some means, real or unreal, of seeking the favour of God. It may be that there are atheists in the world; it is said there are; and yet, apart from monomania, for which no man can account, there are grounds for enter-

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taining very serious doubts. And why? Because as long as man has lucid reason, the logic, the irresistible logic of cause and effect, does not seem to render it possible that any man short of a monomaniac, could be an atheist. As long as man has reason man must have conscience sitting in judgment upon his good and evil; and as long as man has a judge within him, man has accountability within him; and where there is a conscience, and where there is the slightest sense of accountability, atheism seems to be altogether impossible; and where there is intellect, and where there is a sense of accountability, these two constituting the essence of human personality, it seems to be utterly impossible than man can deprive himself of the idea of a personal God. In reality all nations have believed in the personality of God; and however it has been obscured by polytheism, however it has been obscured by idolatry, and however it has been obscured by those who think that God is one like themselves, nothing is more certain than that the idea of the divine personality, of accountability to him, of a desire for his blessing, and a desire for his favour, and a desire for acceptance with him, and that through righteousness, is the first and the middle, and the last desire of all nations. But I say, it is a desire uniformly through righteousness. It embodies the shadow of the truth of the gospel. I admit it is but the shadow, but still, "the shadow telleth of the substance." The gospel realized is the righteousness of God unto all, and upon all them that do believe; but the desire of all nations is to obtain that very thing, although they know not, as yet, the way in which it is to be obtained. Like Columbus seeking the East Indies, it is not found; but in seeking those lands he found the better land; and so if the nations follow up their own desire, and are led by the Spirit of God in following that desire, they end in the fact of the favour of God, and the blessing of God, and the obtaining that righteousness in which alone acceptance with him can be realized. The Jews sought righteousness, and to be saved by it; the Romans sought righteousness, and it lay in devotedness to Cæsar; the Greeks sought righteousness, and it lay in the dogmas of their philosophy; nominal Christians seek acceptance with God, uniformly through righteousness, that is, through something to be endured, or some good to be done, or through some mercy to be asked; but still righteousness is that whereon they depend, and when they can do no more to obtain righteousness they will allow one attribute of God to extinguish another, and a God all mercy to become a God unjust, that in that imaginary mercy which disrobes God of his justice, they may enjoy such a righteousness, not as justice would demand, but as mercy can pass and recognize. The desire of all nations, then, would lead them, if they follow the word and the Spirit of God, to that righteousness which is of the kingdom of God, and which is that of which our Lord speaks when he says: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all other things [these things] shall be added unto you." Let us for a moment pause until we observe this final desire of all nations; and let us remember that the grace or favour of God is our dependence, that the blessing of God alone can make us faithful, and that the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus, which is by faith "unto all and upon all them that believe," can alone make us accepted.

In conclusion, let me turn your attention to three points.

In the first place, let me turn your attention to the claims of Christ. He claims to be the Head of all principality and power, King of kings and Lord of Lords. He claims to be the Teacher of all nations, for he said, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth: go ye therefore into all nations, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and, lo, I am with you always to the end of the world." But he claims to be the Judge of all nations. "When the Son of God shall come in his glory, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory; and before him shall be gathered all nations." And now, I entreat you to ask yourselves this question, Have we recognized Jesus as our Head, our Lord, our King, our Teacher, our Judge? Useless is the listening to man, useless is the meeting in church or elsewhere, unless the Spirit of God lead us to meet with Christ, and to realize those claims

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which the Lord of right declares to be his own. Have you desired him as your Head, your Lord, your King? Have you desired him as your Teacher by his word, his Spirit, and his providence? Have you desired him as your Judge, with whom you can meet, knowing that the Saviour and Judge are concentrated in one person? I say, ask yourselves—have you thus recognized the claims of Christ?

Let me beseech you, in the second place, to consider that there is a two-fold character of Christ: one in which it is said that he has “no form or comeliness that we should desire him;” and another in which it is said that he is the “Desire of all nations.” Now when the Jews saw him, when Caiphas saw him, when Pilate saw him, when Herod and his men saw him, there was no form or comeliness that they should desire him. And why? Why because the very things that make Christ desirable to all nations, are the very things that made him undesirable to sinful men. Because Christ came, a teacher without error, because he came a reader of the heart without darkness, because he came a describer of sin without partiality, because he came a rebuker without respect of persons, therefore the world recognized him not; the world desired a Saviour *in sin*, the world ought to have desired a Saviour *from sin*. But, remember, the very deformities which they saw in him were the very beauties that God saw in him; they were the very beauties that angels saw in him; they were the very beauties that the disciples, the apostles, and the first Christians saw in him; they were the beauty of holiness, the beauty of humility, the beauty of “bearing our sins in his own body on the tree,” the beauty of dying in the depth of humility that he might raise his people to the height of glory. Ah! then I beseech you look at Christ in both aspects: the one in which a sinful world desires him not, though it desires those shadows of him which are still before their eyes; but you desire him because he is the sin bearer, because he is the sacrifice putting away sin, and because he is the resurrection and the life guiding to glory.

Now lastly, Christ presents himself before you as the desire of all nations. I beseech you to consider that this religion of Christ embraces the whole man. A religion of doctrines is easily committed to memory, and by early associations it may be most tenaciously adhered to; but the religion of Christ must reach the whole man, or it does nothing. I beseech you then to remember, as Christ died for you, to ask your own souls, are you living to him? I beseech you, ask yourselves this great question, “Have I ever given up anything for Christ? Have I sacrificed a single lust of the flesh? Have I sacrificed a single passion for Christ? Have I sacrificed a single worldly desire for Christ? Have I put myself to a single inconvenience for Christ?” But I must now ask you more. Are you willing to endure the loss of all things, that you may win Christ; and be found in him, not having your own righteousness, but “the righteousness of God which is in Christ Jesus, unto all and upon all them that believe?” And one word more. Since Jesus has died for all who believe in his name, since Jesus has died that he might save you, are you living to honour him? I beseech you then to consider how far it is your duty not merely to profess his truth and to endeavour to adorn his gospel; but remember this, that as Jesus is the desire of all nations, by the holiness of your lives exhibited in good works, it is your especial and your bounden duty, while all nations desire him, to exhibit the glory of the Saviour to the nation’s assembled representatives.

WITNESSING TO THE TRUTH.

A Sermon

PREACHED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JUNE 22, 1851,

BY THE REV. CHARLES STOVEL,

AT EXETER HALL.

"And ye are witnesses of these things."—*Luke xxiv. 48.*

THESE words are spoken by our Lord himself, and they have reference to injunctions and arrangements stated before. "Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures, and said unto them, thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things." After our Saviour had risen from the dead, and was about to leave his disciples bereft of his presence on earth, it was likely that he would lay open to them something of his plan; and he tells them the character which they and their successors should sustain throughout all time, and the place which they should occupy in the dispensations of God. He was about to establish a kingdom which should extend its influence through all the regions of the earth, and to take his place in heaven at God's right hand, where he would conduct, with his authority its special and mighty affairs, and while he legislates for its guidance, and holds the power of executing his purposes in his own hand, he would have his disciples be employed as his agents. They were to be on earth in the character of witnesses to testify to these things; and their testimony was to be used by him in the accomplishment of his purposes until his return. The testimony to be borne by witnesses must always have reference to the producing of conviction: it is designed to secure the ends of truth; and whether the testimony be given in court, when the culprit is brought there to be criminated and judged, or whether it be given in the case of a negociation when an object is to be obtained by the observance of truth, or whether it be given in any case when a party applies for judgment in his favour and asks to be justified in his inheritance, it is always the same. The object of the witness is to secure by that testimony the full effect of the truth on the case in point; and his responsibility is to withhold nothing of the truth with which he is acquainted, or which may be needed, and is practicable to himself in order to secure the end for which the truth has to be given. Here it is said the disciples are become witnesses of those things. They are witnesses on behalf of their Lord; they are witnesses for him by whom the negociations of mercy are daily conducted; they are witnesses now against the wicked who continue in a state of sin; and they must be witnesses at last when those wicked shall be brought into the presence of Jehovah to receive their final

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doom. Our Lord intends to reveal to his disciples his plan, as it should be conducted in all the transactions of his kingdom, passing down through the various changes of time in which he shall be ever advancing his purposes to completeness. This is the point to be specially observed by us as inviting our attention, and demanding our most conscientious care.

The evidence that a witness shall bring out in any point of time or in any stage of the suit, must always be to the point in hand ; for even the truth, if it be told out of place, will embarrass the whole investigation, and do injury to the advocate and the person whose interests are at stake, and if the attention be fixed on something irrelevant, it diverts the mind from the object which should occupy the court. And so incessantly as time moves on there has been,—if we could find it—a practical centre, a great practical point, on which the evidence of the people of God should always be given, on which their testimony should be borne ; something indeed which existed at the time when the Saviour spoke these words, and something which should exist through all time, till that Saviour come when he has completed all his purposes, but something which will always have a peculiarity just as the times and circumstances change ; and it is just as we appreciate rightly the position in which we are placed, as we consider rightly the evidence that we have to give, the testimony that we have to bear on the Saviour's part, shall we be prepared rightly to discharge our duty to-day, to-morrow, and through the whole period which may be embraced in our earthly lives. On this account we wish to ask your attention this morning, especially to three particulars.

First. The testimony which is required of Christians at the present time.

Secondly. The circumstances which give to this testimony its convincing power ; and

Thirdly. The means which are provided in order to give competency to the Saviour's witnesses. These three points we shall endeavour briefly to explain. The whole of these particulars bear upon the peculiarity in the state of society in which we are placed, and which may be made clear to us by the previous statements. And first : looking over the great portion of the statements made in connection with the passage before, you will see that much of what the Saviour enjoins, and predicts, has been accomplished. "Then opened he their understanding that they might understand the scriptures, and said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer."

Now there are very few, comparatively, who have much doubt respecting the import of the more ancient scriptures respecting the sufferings of Christ, or either as it respects the death of Christ as an atonement for sin, or the rising of Christ from the dead on the third day for our justification : that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, is a point not now to be exhibited ; taking the statement in the sense in which the Saviour used it as applying to the earth as then known and inhabited, the thing has been effected. About the time when John entered into his rest almost the entire habitable and civilized world had been penetrated by the doctrines and institutions of Christ. Our Lord has been mercifully pleased to grant that the extension of his truth should be very wide ; and great machineries are employed at the present time to carry the gospel still further and further to nations that have been occupied since, and that have been discovered since the time when this was given ; and especially in respect to our own nation,

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comparatively few will venture their interests on the simple and open ground of infidelity, either in denying the import of the more ancient scriptures, and the facts by which their predictions were fulfilled; or the proclamation of mercy which has gone out by their means. More or less, public opinion is characterised, and especially in our nation, by respect to the gospel of Christ. And though there are many great questions respecting its importance and its claims upon our attention as to its letter, yet still something like a professed respect for the Saviour is retained, and retained widely, if not universally. We live in a period when Christianity has penetrated not only the legislation of our country, and gathered its influence about the throne and in the place of government, but it has gained its progress in the great masses of society. It has extended its influence wide over the nations of the earth, and it has produced,—in the language of a great personage, lately expressed—“A union which the gospel of Christ alone could devise, which the gospel of Christ could alone effect, which the gospel of Christ alone could preserve,” and I add, to which the gospel of Christ alone can give completeness in its nature and result, and in the face of those attainments of the gospel marking the present time. There is, however, drawn with no doubtful hand, features which indicate the various forms of unbelief that shrinks from the open character of infidelity, which lurks in secret, and effectuates an inversion of the influences of the gospel, and especially when they assail, the practical point in which gospel blessings are to be enjoyed. Whatever shall be found of this character marking our age must unquestionably constitute a definite point of action. If in ancient times it was disputed whether the ancient scriptures meant that Messiah should suffer and rise again, then the witness was to testify on that point, and advance the evidence by which the point should be carried. If it was disputed in some foreign country whether Jesus had actually suffered, their evidence should be taken on that fact. If it was disputed whether repentance for the remission of sins had been proclaimed in his name—that is on his authority, then were the disciples to stand forth and witness upon that point. If in the construction of sinful arrangements and devices of Satan in the work of evil, there should be produced in our time arrangements by which the whole of the mercy of God should be so naturalised, that the man who received it in word should be bereft in act of its advantages, their testimony should be borne upon the practical point; every witness should stand forth with an evidence which might secure the effectual working of mercy to the salvation for which that mercy had been sent.

On this platform of thought you will doubtless perceive immediately the testimony which is required of Christians at the present day. It does not so much relate to the import of the more ancient scriptures; but it relates especially to the proclaimed salvation,—nor to this so much as the fact—for there are few who will dispute that even, who will take the responsibility of denying its value—that repentance and remission of sins have been proclaimed in the name of Jesus. This is too bold a fact, one would think, ever to be denied. What is the testimony then that we can bear at the present time respecting the great practical arrangement of mercy? I say, first, we can bear our testimony to its importance. Secondly, we can bear testimony to its practical attainment, and thirdly, we can bear testimony to the sweetness of the result which follows wherever repentance is exercised, and wherever forgiveness of sins is attained. By these three lines of evidence we

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can reach the point of action, incessantly endeavouring to supply whatever is useful to secure the exercise of faith, and on which all the enjoyment of that mercy depends. The effect of these three points is very great, as they each apply in the present circumstances of society. We hear much in flattering tones of the productions of human ingenuity at the present time, and we are prone to applaud the resources and capabilities of man; and whilst the variety of human labour become accumulated, man is prone to sit down in the midst of his accumulations, and feel himself at rest, self-congregated because of his inheritance and its enlargement in the widening of human intellect. And in the refinement of taste there is a tendency to repose the spirit on that which man has reached, and to say human nature has done much and developed its greatness. When we have the power of the human mind chastened by the reciprocated culture and influence which recognizes a state of tasteful ease, and the enjoyments and luxury of sweetness which that state supplies, there seems nothing to reform in the life, there is nothing to produce gross deviations from propriety, but under the smoothness of that exterior there simply lives an unbelief which takes away all feeling of the necessity of "repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ." It is the business of the Christian to break in upon these polished scenes of sinful ease and cultivated unbelief, and to hold up the testimony wherever human nature is prone to repose in anything short of the mercy which Jesus died to proclaim, and which by his messengers is proclaimed on his authority. And wheresoever it happens that the mind has been led to feel somewhat of the importance of these arrangements of mercy which are here declared, there is also a tendency in the habits of our time, to meet the feeling of importance by the argument of impracticability: when we cry what shall we do? There is an unbelief which answers, we can do nothing. When we lay hold of some promise there is some sophistry which intervenes and says, it is not for you. When we turn to the expected bliss we are opposed by some plan devised either to divert our attention or our aim, or to take away all hope of its acquirement. The Christian is bound to stand before the inquiring men, who are crying, what shall we do? and exhibit the practicability of this arrangement of Divine compassion, and tell to a dying world of that mercy which was proclaimed by God as within the reach of man, and that he himself has obtained mercy, and that therefore others may obtain it too. If the man of the world cast a smile of scornful ridicule upon religion, regarding it as something having a tendency to depress the mind, and make a human being a man of sorrows, the Christian can step forth amid the anxieties of human life, and exhibit a deeper joy and a serener sweetness, a wider felicity and a more elevated happiness. He can testify that it is not only proclaimed, and that it is indispensable to man's happiness, but that it is practicable even to the worst of sinners; and that it is not only practicable, but sweet when it is possessed: it is a heaven of bliss and joy: the smile of a heavenly Father, the foretaste of full felicity!

The circumstances which give effect to the testimony which is borne by Christians now, may be considered under three particulars—precision, obviousness, and consistency. All these have reference to the office we have to fill, as standing distinct from the office of an advocate. The advocate may plead upon all the facts that come within his knowledge, and all that he can collect, and not only upon the facts themselves, but he may also use the greatest skill in the

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arrangement of the facts, and produce as much conviction by the artistic argument of his plan. The more skilful, the more persevering, the greater his effect as an advocate in any case. The witness has a more simple task. He has simply to lay before those who are to consider his testimony, made up of facts, and give a certain amount of evidence of which he himself is the authority, and which he himself can attest, which he does attest. He is, therefore, placed in a solemn position. He is heard for the most part, upon his oath, that he might not cover or conceal anything that is known, or that he might not pervert or affirm anything that is known to be untrue. In this position he is placed that he may have a great degree of credibility. The position in which the Christian is placed is under an arrangement of our Lord, similar. He is called out in the ordinances of mercy to publish a declaration of his own faith; and when he has made a public declaration of his own faith, he stands before the world in the character of a witness to bear testimony to the things that he himself has touched, and tasted, and handled of the word of life. That which gives the peculiar worth to his testimony is, the appreciation which realises in his case, his position—the greatest practical proof of the efficacy of the arrangement in his own case. He is like the apostle. He says—"It is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief." But this does not meet the point fully. "I have obtained mercy," is the realising of the ground on which his evidence can be borne. In this realization of the evidence of the witness which Christians may give, there is a strong adaptation to the system and to the circumstances in which we are placed, when all characters have their peculiarities brought into use in the exercise of their Christian function. Let Christianity meet the man of taste, rich in learning, and refined in culture, and when it has poured its truth upon his soul, he will come forth chastened, and tell to those who have been like himself, how necessary that gospel was to give him hope, or to justify a hope in them—how practical it was, when he considered it as a child, and how sweet were the refinements and the joys he possessed when it poured into his heart. If Christianity is divine, from the dregs of society some poor culprit, stained with all the pollution of the lowest grade—his spirit steeped in the deepest corruptions that are to be found in the lowest orders of human life—that individual may step forth and find mercy; and when any of these arrangements of mercy come to be in dispute, he can stand for ever, like the apostle Paul, and say, "And I obtained mercy;" and thus in every case it will be seen that there are resources connected with the Christian life of an individual, ready to confute any objection to the pleas of mercy, against the supposition that there is in it only that which should continue and increase our woes and cares. The man that bears the most of the cares of the church and the anxieties of the world, will step forth, and give the most serene declaration that this gospel and its joys have been his sole resource. Thus humanity, rises from whatever station and whatever attainments, and is brought into direct employment in giving testimony to the truth which ought to be yielded by witnesses of the time. And when I speak of the obviousness, I do not mean to be misunderstood, as having reference to any such thing, as a public and ostentatious expression of the secrets of Christian experience. Let all these be chastened by proprieties which are to be found in any circle whatever of human life; but when you have chastened them to the greatest refinement of human life, still there is

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boldness and openness of character which ought to be assumed in the practice of the believer, which shall make what he himself has attained to become an example and testimony which cannot be mistaken, and which none can avoid. And when there is this—whensoever he attained to that obviousness which should stand, by the precision of his testimony, he is prepared to put in the clearest light the thing that he intends to declare, there is consistency required that he who is concerned to-day for the great salvation, should be found concerned for it to-morrow—that he who realizes now that interest in Christian society, that earnestness which is to be found in the society of the world—that the man who has been open, and decisive in the testimony, that he is for God, in the midst of all, should also be decided when friends are to be lost, and when interests are to be sacrificed. That man should not rest, indeed, in the influences of the gospel which he himself has received, but the position in which he shall stand should be like one communing with the unseen world, acting under the influence of its vast realities, beholding and living everlasting under the apprehension of the Divine presence, working in terror of the final judgment, and rising in the fulness of Christian hope; with precision, with obviousness, and with consistency, testifying to all his fellow men around him that this is the only way to everlasting life.

All that can be said this morning respecting the means supplied for the qualification of witnesses, may easily be suggested under three particulars—

First, The personal use which we have of the Divine Word and its ordinances.

Second, In Christian and prayerful conference on the work itself.

And, Thirdly, In personal and collective communion with the Holy Ghost.

Each of these might well deserve the attention which might be given to them in a specific discourse; in the first place, with respect to the word of God,—with all its contents, steeped with the features of practicability. It is communicated from one who looks upon human affairs as they are, and communicates to man as he is; what is designed to constitute a direction in his whole movements, and consistency in his practical life. The promise seems adapted to all, to every case of difficulty and trial. Is a man in darkness? Is he in light? Is he in the midst of Christian movements? Is he in the midst of temptation? Is he in prosperity or adversity? In the midst of all, there are definite applications of the Divine truth, each of which might be taken as distinct as any other experiment within the range of practical affairs, and reduced at once to an experiment, which brought out the results whether satisfactory or not. You may take every promise, every precept, every prophecy, and reduce them to use. Besides this, you have the rich advantage which is supplied in connection with divine truth; but you have also an advantage which is supplied in our communication with the divine presence. The throne of grace is an arrangement in which the poor, helpless, and sinful man may come and tell his tale of woe even when it comes not within any of the arrangements of the divine mercy. If there be no promise to warrant, he can come weak as he is, and so present himself as only poor before God. In the midst of these exercises, in communing of the heart with the heart, seeing God, and in the use which he makes of the word, which is “a lamp unto his feet and a light unto his path,” he may gather up indisputably, an immense mass of experience on which he may build his testimony for God. When once you can come to this point, in respect of individuals

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you may take the associated individuals within a circle—you may sit down and carefully contemplate with each other what is the precise point on which testimony is required. In these deliberations of Christian brotherhood, there is oftentimes an accumulation of Christian experience, and we can compare with each other what we ourselves have collected of the treasures of the church. When we have accomplished this, and used the advantages which are given, we have still further felicity appointed to us in our approach to that eternal Spirit, who is the Comforter, and who is to abide with us always and lead our thoughts into the contemplation of the divine mysteries, and bring the word of Christ to our hearts cheering us on in a point of practical effect, not only to the attainment of this experience, but will enable us to stand in the midst of men of our time, and bear witness to the riches and the accessibility of the grace of God.

And these three points go directly to bear upon one distinct line of Christian duty. I should be sorry, for myself, brethren, to think that—having been called together in these special exercises, originated, indeed, by a circumstance that I need not explain to you,—we should not catch at least one lesson from the circumstances of the times and gather up our spirits into one position, which may give distinctness to our movements. In the first place, I would not have foreigners depart from our shores, or visitors come to join with us in felicity and peace—not one, to contemplate the works of art, and see the solemn sombre productions of the English hand—I would not have a nation turn its attention to our shores, no one splendid visitor appear upon our coasts, without in the end, that nation receiving a testimony to the riches of the grace of God ; nor when they descend into the circles of private life, and enter into the fellowship of men around us, I would not have them appear there without their receiving a distinct and most palpable evidence that the riches of the grace of God are indispensable to nation's welfare, and that they may be attained with the greatest facility. How should we, at such a time as this, whilst we look upon the wide profession of Christianity amongst us, feeling how enfeebled it is, withdraw our hand ; but stand like the sun in the firmament, which though it may be sometimes covered with a cloud, as it were, to soften its beams, yet it is there a blazing orb in winter and in summer, and though it does not appear by night, as in the day, yet by its reflected light, it continues to pour out its influence, and thus bears its testimony to the power and glory and goodness of its Creator.

If I might dwell for one moment on the motives which are suggested by such a love of conduct, I would observe in the first place, the alternative which hangs suspended upon the duty we have to discharge. There is not a brother or sister, not a friend with whom we can stand in contact, but must be either saved or lost. That individual who is before our eyes, be the lovelessness or grossness whatever it may, is yet in that position that he may be saved—he may be lost ! He is in that position in which he may be saved or he may be lost. How fearful is the aspect which is thrown over human society when the thread of life is only protracted to an uncertain period, and marked by so many indications of its brevity and brittleness. In such a state of things we might stand appalled, but still there is another alternative that stands immediately connected with us. We must be implicated—we can have no choice—we must be implicated in that alternative. We have been in contact. We have not chosen our position. It is given to us by God who made us. We are here—we are there, and the destiny which is before us is

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fixed, in the alternative ; and if we understand it, if we have a knowledge of salvation and its experience, we must, therefore, be implicated in their safety, or must be implicated in their destruction. They will go down to the grave, saying, Men cared not for my soul, or they will go down to the grave feeling that his testimony gave a conviction to their consciences, witnessing to their guilt. In this position we are all bound to stand. Let me ask any individual who knows the influence of the human mind, whether such a testimony ought not to be borne, at least so far as a testimony can be borne. Shall he not bear a testimony to a man who is either to be saved or lost, who is looking forward to a deep irrevocable doom, or to a height of glory which imagination cannot reach, and when I myself must be implicated in the consequences of his position, how sweet must be the thought when we see the destiny before us, to feel in either case that we are a sweet smelling savour unto God !

And, besides the felicities to be realized by success which ought continually to press upon the heart, let it be said, that the bearing of the testimony upon earth may be sometimes connected with painful sacrifices, when we stand out before the mass of individuals to bear our testimony to divine truth, to all who are accessible ; and we cannot be understood ; and when we realize in ourselves the fact that every step we take subjects us to many disadvantages, how sweet then would it be for us to remember that the time will come when there shall be joy in heaven over every soul which has been conducted from earth by the kindness and co-operation of the divine mercy and power. Such considerations as these are well adapted to give an immense impulse to our minds in all the exercises in which we are engaged. For while we are moving in our places on earth, we learn from the prophetic writings that he is engaged in wondrous activity now in one form, and now in another, displaying his tremendous operations in declaring the course of his mercy to its close. In Isaiah we find him filling the temple with his train—in Ezekiel he appears in his war chariot, blazing with triumph. You see him in Daniel in dark emblems and various images. In the Apocalypse we behold him before the throne opening the seals—you will find him uttering his thunders and declaring his wrath and as he proceeds onwards he pours out his vials and vindicates his name and reaching a point, he shews forth the new Jerusalem in all its grandeur, glory, sweetness, and blessedness—the everlasting treasure of those who have gained his mercy and testified his love. May the Lord bless his word Amen !

The following Nos. of the Penny Pulpit contain Sermons delivered at Exeter Hall.

- 1,700, The Great Exhibition, by the Rev. T. Binney.
- 1,701, The Gift of God, by the Hon. and Rev. B. W. Noel, M.A.
- 1,705, The Prodigal's Return, by the Rev. W. Brock.
- 1,706, The City of Refuge, by the Rev. J. Beaumont, M.D.
- 1,710, The Truth, by the Rev. J. Aldis.
- 1,711, Wisdom's Invitation, by the Rev. G. Smith.
- 1,713, Looking to Christ, by the Rev. J. Hamilton, D.D.
- 1,714, Why will ye die? by the Rev. J. Stoughton.
- 1,717, The Gospel, by the Rev. Luke Tyerman.
- 1,718, The Testimonies of God, by the Rev. T. Archer, D.D.
- 1,720—21, The Book for all Nations, and all Times, by the Rev. J. C. Miller.
- 1,724, Salvation, by the Rev. G. Clayton.
- 1,725, The difficulties of speculative Inquiry, by the Rev. J. H. Hinton, A.M.
- 1,728, The Final Judgment, by the Rev. John Burnet.
- 1,729, The Desire of all Nations, by the Rev. W. Cooke, D.D.

(To be continued.)

THINGS TEMPORAL.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY EVENING, JUNE 22, 1851,

BY THE REV. SAMUEL MARTIN,

AT EXETER HALL.

"The things that are seen are temporal."—2 Corinthians iv. 18.

"The things that are seen are temporal," that is,—all that is visible is transient. Our bodies are appointed to die, our raiment waxes old and perishes, our food is consumed, our dwellings decay, all that human industry produces is but of brief and uncertain duration; even the days of this planet are numbered:—and although we do not believe that either matter or spirit will be destroyed yet both are destructible; and it may be that there is not an atom in the creation which abides in one place, or a combination of particles that does not change its form—God alone changes not. With instability at the core, we cannot expect immutability on the surface. All visible conditions of humanity are temporal; youth is not immortal, strength is not always renewable, disease is not everlasting, health is not unimpairable; giant and dwarf fall into the same grave, and stature is lost in one common dissolution: beauty and deformity are obliterated by the worms of the sepulchre; riches take wing; poverty is supplanted; and much of the pleasure and misery, the honour and dishonour, the obscurity and prominence which now mark the children of men continues but for a little time and then vanishes away. All this finds counterparts in the alternations of light and darkness, cold and heat, summer and winter, and in many other vicissitudes to which the world we inhabit is subject. "The things that are seen are temporal." Everything upon which the eye rests is temporal. The flowers fade and the oaks decay; the grass withers and the cedars fall; the insect dies and the mammoth perishes; the dewdrop is absorbed and the river is dried up; the mountain torrent disappears, and "there shall be no more sea;" the mote is dissolved in the sunbeam, and "the everlasting hills," they bow. "The things that are seen are temporal." See you that great man in high place? "Howl fir-tree, yon cedar shall fall." Observe you that modest man in low place? The retired nook shall one day know its occupant no more. Even our relationships are temporal. The ties that bind husband and wife, parent and child, brother and sister, are all temporal. Kings are temporal; and kingdoms. Sacred ministries are temporal; and churches. There is no everlasting polity either civil or sacred. "The things that are seen are temporal"—without exception, temporal. In the material world, in human nature, in human society, there is an incessant

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pulling down and building up. Everywhere "organization tends to dissolution, and dissolution becomes in its turn the parent of organization"—so that by a fixed and universal law "the things that are seen are temporal."

These words are the Apostle Paul's, and he refers directly to the visible sources of his trouble. He means to say—the prison, the scourge, the rod, the beasts of the amphitheatre, wicked men, stoning, shipwreck, peril, [wars, fastings, watching, hunger, thirst, cold, nakedness—these things "seen," Paul says, "are temporal." But he includes other things,—all he had ever seen; his native city and province, the teachership of Gamaliel, the Land of Promise, Jerusalem the Holy City, the Temple of God,—all that was beautiful in Corinth, all that was magnificent in Rome, all that was luxurious in Ephesus—"the things that are seen." Things man has made and fashioned—hut and palace, encampment and city, clan and empire. Things God has made, flowers and trees, rivers and oceans, hills and mountains. Things men dread and hope for, things men love and hate, things men flee from and pursue, things men mourn over and rejoice in—"the things that are seen are temporal." They endure for a time, they continue for a while, they are made but for a season; they are all things WITHOUT ROOTS.

I. Now, if "*the things seen are temporal*," *the good things seen are not enough for us.*

1. Man is more than what is visible. All that constitute man is neither visible nor divisible, tangible nor material. No man can demonstrate this to another, but every man has a witness in himself. We are conscious that we are spirits, and not mere flesh; we know that reason is not the eye, nor faith the ear, nor will the hand or foot, nor emotion and conscience nerves of sensation. We are aware of commanding and directing the eye, the ear, the hand and the foot. And we say instinctively, I looked, I listened, I walked, I spoke, thus tracing our actions to an inner self, and ever recognizing their unity and identity. Every man is sensible that he is not mere body. This consciousness may be overlooked, this consciousness may be neglected, this consciousness may be perverted, this consciousness may be denied,—just as the nervous system may become morbid or paralyzed while the system remains. Man is ever saying to himself—only listen to him—I am spirit and not mere flesh. What that spirit is, we know not. But we do not know what matter is, neither do we know what life is. And the knowledge of what spirit is, is not necessary to us. Men may breathe the air and walk in the light, and yet be ignorant of atmospheric phenomena, and have no theory about the nature of light. And so men may live a spiritual life, and yet not be able to answer the question, 'What is the spirit in man?' Man is more than what is visible.

2. The invisible in man thirsts for things not seen—for it's true objective. There are two kinds of *rest*, one in the body; the other in the soul. You may often see the body restless, and the soul quiet; the soul disturbed and the body asleep. Easy chairs, elastic couches, downy pillows, cool and quiet chambers are not sufficient to give any man all the rest he needs. He wants freedom from disturbing thoughts, from distracting cares, from consuming passion, from gnawing emotion, from restless will—but anything that ministers to mere body cannot secure this kind of rest. It may never enter the court of a king, and it may never leave the cell of one of his captives. There are two classes of *enjoyments*, those derived from things, and those drawn from thoughts—that which springs from what is without a man, and the joy that wells up within

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him—the happiness derivable from what a man *hath*, and that which rises from what a man *is*—the pleasure which comes from the seen, and that which flows from the perceived. There are two sorts of *worship*; the worship of our echoes, the worship of our shadows, the worship of our counterparts—which all false gods everywhere are—the other is the worship of one object above all, and yet in all that is God. The true idea of God, is, this idea blended with priority of existence, superiority of being, with supremacy of position and of right. For the invisible God—for unseen enjoyment, for invisible rest, men thirst—that within them which is unseen thirsts. There is in man a longing soul, a panting spirit, a thirsting heart. The unseen in you seeks the unseen.

3. A man will continue to live when on earth he is no more visible. We desire continued existence constitutionally, and we may infer that the object of this desire is provided by him who implanted the thirst. The spirit survives changes analogous to death, and almost as radical as death; and we may infer that the death of the body will not obliterate the life of the spirit. The ends of divine justice demand that man should live after he leaves this world; nor would it seem consistent with the divine goodness that the spirit and the body should perish together. But we are not left to the testimony of reason. God tells us that all who have died yet live. We are assured by the divine word, that existence after death is the portion of us all. The fact is, our death is but the beginning of a new life, in obedience to a law that we find throughout the creation of God. Now familiarity with what is seen merely, would leave us unprepared for a happy future state. We could not live in the sphere of the blessed. There—God is more seen than his creatures—here—his creatures are more seen than Himself. Yonder we say God is more visible than his creatures—there, too, the will of God is the only law of conduct, and the glory of God is the supreme object. Pleasure there is spiritual, and pleasure there is divine, in harmony with the blessedness of the God. Now if we are ignorant of God; if our conduct has been guided by the course of our fellow creatures; if temporal objects have been our end; if our enjoyments have been the pleasure of sense merely; then to the celestial paradise we shall be like living creatures taken from their native element; we must then from all that is pure and happy perish.

Because there is more in man than what is seen,—because the invisible in man thirsts for invisible objects,—because man will live on, when his earthly place knows him no more,—because making things seen our portion will expose us to destitution in a future state,—we say, *that good things seen are not enough for us*. These things are temporal, our thirsts are enduring and immortal. Things seen will not slake the thirst of the spirit. We want living bread; we want water of life; we want raiment that waxes not old; we want houses not made with hands; we want treasure that moth and rust corrupt not; we want an inheritance that fades not away; we want a continuing city; we want a kingdom that cannot be moved. It is not enough for you, my brother, to labour for the meat that perisheth; it is not enough for you to lay up treasure on earth. He who calls this enough mocks his necessities; he is deepening and widening in his spirit, “an aching void.” The things that are seen, are to that man a snare. He is like a bird entrapped by the fowler—he is like a beast in a pitfall—he is like an eagle chained—he is starving the noblest part of his nature—he is consuming himself by neglected thirst—he is in the worst sense—a suicide!

II. If “*the things seen are temporal*,” then the GRIEVOUS things seen should never

make the Christian faint. The afflictions of Christ's disciples are all temporal, the *afflictions*, I say, not the good wrought by them;—the good wrought by them abides: it is the sorrow that is transient. Tribulation is sometimes appointed to remove an evil—it accomplishes its work of purification, and then it terminates; the sorrow departs, but the purity remains. The fire of the refiner is not always directed to the same piece of metal. One particular portion is exposed to the fire but for a limited season; the refining is transient; the refinement is enduring. Affliction is sometimes originated to educate the soul for some superior state and position. It develops and trains, and then it ceases; but after it has ceased, the training remains. “The heir so long as he is a child is under tutors and governors,” but when he comes of age he is no longer under a schoolmaster. The work of education ceases; the results of education abide. Sorrow is appointed to prevent some spiritual evil. A temporary breakwater is provided for a flood tide; but as soon as the waters have reached the ordinary level; the breakwater is removed. The check is taken away, but the advantages of the check abide. The affliction is temporal, not its results, but *itself*. There is that which sorrow cannot destroy, cannot remove, cannot impair. It may blanche the hair, it may wrinkle the brow, it may furrow the cheek, it may weaken the nerves, it may reduce the muscles, it may impoverish the blood, it may bring down the health, it may break up the constitution, it may destroy the body—it may involve the loss of liberty, the loss of property, the loss of kindred, the loss of friendship, the loss of reputation, the loss of all seen good things, yet it is temporal. To Christ's disciples there is no everlasting disease, no abiding weakness, no inextricable thorn in the flesh, no eternal death, no settled poverty, desolation, or destitution. The prisons in which they may be incarcerated have not “everlasting doors.” The chains by which they are fettered are not “eternal brass.” Their persecutors will not live for ever. All their afflictions are temporal. They weep now, but they shall laugh: they groan now, but they shall sing; tears fill their eyes now, but these tears shall be wiped away; they are in much tribulation, but see they are coming up out of it; and all things are working together for their good. Night is over them, but the morning will be born of that night; clouds are around them, but the sun will scatter the mists; the winter is here, but the time of the singing of birds shall come. We see the temporal evil, but we do not see the eternal good. Joseph is cast into the pit, is sold as a slave, is put into prison. We see the pit, the bondage, and the dungeon, but we do not see the good God intends by all this, until the evil has passed away, and Joseph is set over all the land of Egypt. Lazarus is a beggar, and as we look at him, we see nothing but beggary around him and before him. But hovering over him are angels waiting to convey him to Abraham's bosom. Paul is a prisoner at Phillipi. We see the prison, the stocks, the jailer; but we do not see heaven waiting to rejoice over the conversion of that jailer and his house. Jesus Christ is crucified. His enemies see him die, but they do not see that by lifting him up, they are preparing for the redemption of an apostate world. “The things that are seen are temporal.” All that is visible, as producing sorrow, and as expressing sorrow in Christ's disciples, is temporal; “For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which

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are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal."

Who should faint with such a prospect? The Christian disciple is in affliction, but there is prepared for him *glory*, excellent glory, glory infinitely excellent, a burden of glory, an eternal weight of glory. And affliction compared herewith is a trifle—it is momentary. Then who should faint under it? Of the glory it shall be said in every stage of consciousness, **MORE, MORE, MORE**—but of the affliction the Christian disciple may every moment that he suffers, say, **LESS, LESS, LESS.**

"Faint not, thou child of earth
At hope's eclipse, in trial's darkest hour:
Such is the heritage of human birth,
And such the seed-time of the spirit's power,
If in affliction's day, thy courage fall,
Be sure thy strength is small.

For each immortal name—
Each star resplendent in the realm of mind,—
Ere power woke the tardy ear of Fame,—
In tribulation's furnace was refined,
And who art thou, O man, to faint before
Grieves the immortals bore.

I see—I see them stand
In solemn watch round the refiner's fire,
Hunger and Pain, and Care—a dismal band;
Neglect's cold glance, Slander's envenomed ire,
Each fell oppressor of our race is there,
Except alone—Despair.

For mid the lurid light,
As witnessed by the Chaldee monarch old,
I see a shining form of seraph bright
Walking, the noble spirit to uphold,
To aid it with affliction's rage to cope—
Serene, celestial Hope.

Then faint not thou, nor fail!
In patience pass the fiery portal through;
Firm be thy spirit, though thy flesh is frail,
And see what visions open to thy view.
Honour on earth extends her golden prize,
And glory in the skies.

III. *If all things seen are temporal, then in nothing temporal should a man find either his hell or his heaven.* We say, if all things seen are temporal, then in nothing temporal should a man find either his hell or his heaven. No fire that consumes you here need be unquenchable. No gnawing worm that torments you here need be immortal. No pit into which you have fallen need be bottomless. No darkness now around you need be abiding. This *may be* mark—The fire can be carried hence and made everlasting; the worm can be taken with you, and constituted deathless. The temporal pit may lead to an eternal pit. The gloom can be fixed; but this is not necessary. There is a fire annihilator,—a worm destroyer,—a brother to raise you from the pit—there is eternal light to banish your mortal darkness. The poor need not be always poor,—poverty may be confined to the temporal. The sick need not be always in pain,—suffering may be limited to the temporal. The stranger need not be always desolate,—solitude may be limited to the temporal. The prisoner need not be always a captive, the bondage may be limited to the temporal. No man need be buried in affliction, lost in sorrow, destroyed by grief—he may be saved finally from all evil, and now before that salvation is consummated, he may be sustained by hope. No man, however afflicted, need find a hell on earth. But no man can find here a heaven. No—this is not your rest. Here you cannot

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meet with fulness of joy. Here you cannot find everlasting pleasures. Perfect peace is not from the things seen and temporal. All that is here, is transient. As we run, the goal recedes—as we fight, new foes appear—good things perish in the using, and all that is bright fades. The eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the hand with grasping. Heaven is the ultimate and aggregate of what is really good and desirable. Now that ultimate and that aggregate, cannot be found among the seen. They are among the unseen. Wealth cries, "Heaven is not in me,—I cannot procure health or the disposition to enjoy that which I supply, neither can I give a tittle of what man wants." Honour cries, "Heaven is not in me—my laurels fade—my crowns are tarnished. Earth's homes cry, Heaven is not in us. We cannot shut out sickness. We cannot banish death. We are never secure from sorrow or from want..." "The things that are seen are temporal."

Now let us, before we part, get this common truth—this almost truism, this every day fact that we are so tempted to overlook—let us get it engraven upon our hearts. The poet may help us; hear him sing—

" 'Twas ever thus, from childhood's hour—
I saw my fondest hopes decay;
I never raised a tree or flower,
But 'twas the first to fade away.
I never nursed a dear gazelle
That watched me with its bright black eye,—
But when it came to know me well,
And love me,—it was sure to die!"

The poet says, "The things that are seen are temporal." The father of philosophy may help us. "I say then the lovers of wisdom know that philosophy, receiving their soul in this state, gently exhorts it, and endeavours to free it, by shewing that the view of things, by means of the eye, is full of deception, as also is that through the ears and the other senses, persuading an abandonment of these so far as it is not absolutely necessary to use them, and advising the soul to be collected and concentrated within itself, and to believe nothing else but herself, with respect to what she herself understands of things that have a real subsistence, and to consider nothing true which she views through the medium of others, and which differ under different aspects; for that a thing of this kind is sensible and visible, but that what she herself perceives is intelligible and invisible. The soul of the true philosopher, therefore, thinking that she ought not to oppose this deliverance, accordingly abstains as much as possible from pleasures and desires, griefs and fears, considering that where any one is exceedingly delighted or alarmed, grieved or influenced by desire, he does not merely suffer such evil from these things as one might suppose,—such as either being sick or wasting his property, through indulging his desires, but that which is the greatest evil, and the worst of all, this he suffers, and is not conscious of it." "The things that are seen are temporal." The wise man of the Bible may teach us. He writes his own experience in that book—Ecclesiastes, and he says, "Whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them; I withdrew not my heart from any joy. For mine heart rejoiced in all my labour. And this was my portion of all my labour. Then I looked on all the works that mine hands had wrought, and on the labour that I had laboured to do, and behold all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun." "The things that are seen are temporal."

Come to the feet of Jesus Christ, and hear him say, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon the earth, where moth and dust corrupt, and where

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thieves do break through and steal." "Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but that which endureth to everlasting life." "I am the bread of life. He that hath me shall never hunger, and he that believeth in me shall never thirst." "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." The occasion on which these last words were uttered is most instructive, and intimately connected with our subject. The occasion was the Feast of Tabernacles, concerning which it was said, "Whoever has not witnessed these things has no conception of what a jubilee is." With sound of trumpets, and cymbals, the priests shouted, "With joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation." Water dipped with golden vessels from the sacred fountain, was mingled with wine, and poured upon the altar. And all that could express joy and gladness was present at that feast. Christ rises up in the midst of it, and says, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." And wherefore?—that temple was temporal—those priests were temporal—that holy land was temporal—that festive season was temporal—all that men then beheld and rejoiced in, was temporal, and because Christ knew that they wanted the unseen, and the eternal—because he felt that he could give the unseen and eternal, he cried in the midst of that jubilee, saying—"If any man thirst, let him come unto ME and drink."

But do we not prove both by observation and by experience that the things seen are temporal? We find them temporal. Nothing that we plant, roots. Even your churches do not root. By churches, I do not mean God's church, the invisible church, a part of which is to be found in all sects, and some of which is to be found in no sects. I do not mean that, but I mean the churches that men make and that men gather. They do not root. Our own ecclesiastical history during the last few years proves this; and reminds us that even these things seen are temporal. You have a Free Church of Scotland—you have secessions from Wesleyanism—you have several parties in the Church of England. Nothing, I say, nothing that we plant roots, and everything that we find rooted is, in the course of our lives, plucked up. "The things that are seen are temporal."

Now there are two duties springing from this truth,—*the duty of moderation towards all things temporal*. The Apostle Paul refers to this when he says, "It remaineth that both they that had wives, be as though they had none: and they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; and they that use this world, as not abusing it; for the fashion of this world passeth away." Govern both the sorrow and the joy—the hope and the fear, which spring from things seen. Great joy over such things is dangerous, and deep grief is needless. Fear magnifies its objects—hope prophesies falsely. Hold then the *good* things seen with a slack hand. They are temporal and will be taken from you, and if you grasp them firmly, the removal of these things will shake you from hand to heart; from heart, to foot. Let not the *evil* things seen, get too firm a hold upon you. If you do suffer this, you will exhaust your energies on what is light and momentary—you will have no power left for what is of infinite importance and eternal.

2. *Then comes the duty of seeking a heritage in what is unseen and eternal.* Spiritual in nature, we are spiritual in our wants and desires. Immortal in our destiny, immortality characterises many of our necessities and desires. Let us provide for the future. But do not misunderstand me. I speak not of earth's

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to-morrow. That is no certain future—it is no real future—it may never come. But there is a future that *will* come, *must* come, shall come—that future—*our future*. The future to us is beyond our grave. It is not what is between our present position and our sepulchre. I say, our future—that which we know will be our future—our real and certain future, the future beyond our sepulchre. Let us provide for it—for that endless life. We shall need other occupation than business—other wealth than money—other enjoyments than pleasures of sense—other relations than our kindred according to the flesh. Oh ! learn that business—possess yourselves of that treasure—enter into those joys—have fellowship with such kindred. Your nature urges you. Circumstances urge you. God invites you. The things of sense are unstable. The things seen are for a season. You want things eternal. Seek such things. It is due to yourselves. You are *capable* of seeking the things that are above. Why prostitute your powers? Why live below your sphere? It is due to God. He has given you spiritual capacities, and an immortal destiny. Will you degrade yourselves and dishonour your Creator. It is due to Christ—he came from the unseen down to the seen, and tarried long enough to fix some human eyes upon him. When he had done this, he ascended again to the unseen, carrying the eyes and the hearts of his followers with him. He leaves them here with a commission, to bid all men look to him that they may rise in mind and heart to heaven with him. We say to you, in Jesus' name, rise to God—rise with Christ. "Seek the things that are above." "Set your affections on things that are above." Will you not listen to Christ? He was made flesh for you. He became a servant for you. He was a man of sorrows for you. He died for you. He lives in heaven for you. Will you not listen to him? He knows that the things seen are temporal, for he made them. He knows it, for he intends to destroy them, and he it is who advises you, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth."

But the application is wider than the sphere we have made it fill. When you are tempted to envy the rich, the great, and the noble, remember, "the things seen are temporal." When you are disposed to covet your neighbour's house, or anything that is your neighbours, remember, "the things seen are temporal." When disposed to make business, or politics your one pursuit, remember, "the things seen are temporal." When you see the wicked flourish and the righteous depressed, remember, "the things seen are temporal." As you cling to your earthly kindred, as you reckon up your treasures, as you overlook your possessions, as you sit in your dwellings, as you walk through the streets, *when you visit yonder Crystal Palace*, remember, "the things that are seen are temporal." As you observe ecclesiastical changes—the creation of new sects, and the death of old ones, remember, "the things seen are temporal!" Bind this for a sign upon your hand—place it as a frontlet between your eyes—inscribe it upon the posts of your doors—write it upon the gates of your city—wear it as a phylactery—write it upon the tablet of your hearts—remember what to write—"the things that are seen are temporal." Let this inscription abide there until personal contact with things that are not transient shall supplant this inscription by another, "the things that *are not* seen are eternal."

THE HOPE OF THE BELIEVER—"SURE AND STEDFAST."

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JUNE 29, 1851,

BY THE REV. W. BROCK,
(Of Bloomsbury Chapel,)

AT EXETER HALL,

"Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that which is within the veil."—Hebrews vi. 19.

It is one of distinguishing characteristics of the unregenerate, my brethren, that they "have no hope." Not that they think they have no hope, nor that they seem to have no hope, for if you were to ask the first man you meet on your return home to-day, you would find, in all probability, that he would speak of certain things which he dreaded, and of certain things which he desired; and presently you would find him using the very word employed in our text—he "hoped" to avoid the one and secure the other. If you went on to speak to him about acceptance with God now, and enjoyment with God hereafter, he would still seem to have a hope, and speak as if he had. The Scriptures however declare he has no hope; so that if you chose still to designate his emotion by that word, you must remember it is a hope which will make ashamed, which will be cut off, and be like giving up the ghost.

Now let me read to you God's own deliverance on that matter, that no man may say this is the mere denunciation of an interested priesthood, or anything of that sort. It is God's own assertion that we are naturally strangers from the covenant of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world. This settles the whole matter, that till man return to God, through Jesus Christ, whatever the emotion they entertain, or the designation they give to it, God declares that they are without hope, and without God in the world. This is a decision which all thoughtful minds should take into their account at once. We sing in our poetry about the "Pleasures of Hope," and we all know what a motive power it is in the endurance of difficulty and in the performance of duty. If I believed in the general authority of the Sacred Scriptures, without fully acknowledging Jesus Christ, I should take it that the book in whose general authority I believed, decided as it respects myself, that I had "no hope;" and I think alarm should follow from the discovery of that decision, and that men should ask whether it be a possibility that they may become possessed of hope; and, if so, the answer to those who ask that question is so plain that a wayfaring man may perceive it.

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In the first place, God calls himself the "God of Hope." This alone should prevent any man from despairing. It is a designation in itself encouraging. You may go to him in that character, and address him accordingly, and not only so, but we are told that "Whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning, that we, through patience and comfort of the Scriptures, might have hope." God himself is the author of that hope, and the Bible is the means which he employs for its production. It is entirely, therefore, at your own door that the sin and misery will lie if you are not partakers of that hope—the hope of God's own children. You have all the material on the one hand, and his most gracious promise and declaration on the other; and let me trust, that as I shall be expounding to you this morning the privilege of him who hath believed, you will determine to come, as we have come, and to ask for the impartation to you of the same blessed privilege, that you, with us, may rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. Now let the man who has, and the man who has not believed, alike hearken to the Apostle's declaration in the text. "Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that which is within the veil."

The first thing here suggested is that the hope of the Christian man is a specific and well defined hope—a hope about which he can give an answer—a hope which he can trace to its origin, and the operations of which he is able in some measure, to explain. This may be seen from the use made of the word "which," in the passage before us. There is nothing loose, vague, and indeterminate—"which hope." What hope? If you will turn to the preceding verse you will read—"That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us, which hope we have," &c. Now what are we to understand by this? The idea seems to be that these men, when awakened by the power of the Holy Ghost to a sense of their personal danger, look about them for some place of deliverance to which they may run and be secure. And the Apostle says, that for men in that condition, there is a hope set before them in the gospel, that is accessible to them—it is within their reach—thrown wide open; and there is the voice of mercy bidding them fly from the wrath to come; and the men here spoke of have hearkened to that voice. They have availed themselves of that provision, they have run thereunto, and they are saved. It is a mental act, of course; but it may be exactly illustrated by the case of Joab. You will find in his history, that he fled into the Tabernacle, and laid hold on the horns of the altar. We are to regard Christ as a refuge from impending danger. He is set before you in the Bible intelligibly, so that there can be no mistake; and, regarding Christ as a refuge, and yourselves as wanting a refuge; there is but one course open to you—to betake yourselves to him, and within the covert of his power you will find the exceeding great and precious promises which are all yea and amen in him, and you lay hold upon them as Joab did upon the horns of the altar. No harm can come to you so long as these precious promises remain. They are the ground of your hope, and it is by believing them that your faith becomes "the substance of things hoped for."

There is no hope for the man who is out of Christ; and the hope is to be obtained not before, but after you have gone to the Saviour. Let not the wicked one delude you with the idea that you must prepare yourself; your first thing is to betake yourself to the Redeemer—"to fly for refuge to the

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hope set before you in the gospel." This is what the Christian has done, and this is what you must do ; for it is only in Christ that this hope can be obtained. If you will come to Christ as rebellious children he will receive you. He will not, however, receive you in a state of forgetfulness of your guilt and transgression. He has not arranged that marvellous economy—that stupendous scheme of mercy for our recovery—in order that you or I may just avail ourselves of it in this way. God will receive you and give you hope in Christ—out of Christ he will not receive you at all. The hope, therefore, of the Christian man is specific, and well defined ; it is obtained by believing in Christ, and retained by believing in Christ. Apart from the promises made through the Saviour, we should still be without God, and without hope in the world ; but we have fled for refuge, and hence it is that we are saved by hope, "which hope we *have*." It is not something either in the future or in the past ; but something relating to the present time. "Which hope we *have*," that is, it is a part of our spiritual nature, and we could no more take away a Christian's "hope," than you could take away his "life;" it is a part of the new creation in Christ Jesus.

Secondly, we notice that this hope, derived from Christ, relates to a condition of blessedness—it entereth into that which is within the veil. Now who can tell us what there is within the veil ? Who can conceive what it is to have Christ entered in amongst these things within the veil, as our forerunner and representative ? Christian brethren, I should like to have you try to think of that which is "within the veil," and of Christ as being there amongst all these things, and being there on your account. But what thought of ours can get up, even remotely, towards the fact ? What mind—even if all the minds in this congregation could be consolidated into one great mind—what mind could get up towards realizing the fact of that which is within the veil ? There is the "inheritance of the saints in light." There are the "many mansions;" there are the Lord's redeemed ones with their white robes, golden harps, and golden censers ! There is no more night there ; there is no more curse within the veil ; neither is there any more pain, or any more death within the veil and but a little separates us from all this. It is but a veil ! Beyond it is the tree of life, with its twelve manner of precious fruits. Within the veil, according to the declaration of this precious book, there is that which God has prepared from all eternity for those who love him and serve him in Christ Jesus. This is not removed from us indefinitely. It does not exist merely in the fancy of the preacher. *There is a heaven !* This is as sure as that there is an earth. Paul had seen it with his own eyes ; and if any body had asked him what there was there, he would have told them that he had actually set his eyes upon the great white throne, which is from everlasting—that he had seen the fountains of living water, and had heard the song of Moses and of the Lamb—that song which we are so fond of singing—"Salvation to him that sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb for ever !" There Christ is in the midst of it all.

He is there as our forerunner. The idea is that of a courier going before the sovereign or prince, representing his master ; the prince may be a long way behind, but he will arrive, in due time. The courier makes every necessary arrangement ; he prepares the regal palace, and waits his Lord's arrival. Think of this ; do it reverently, but do not be afraid to do it. Jesus Christ, as our forerunner, has removed the obstacles out of our way, and made all the necessary preparations for our safe departure from that

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which is seen, and temporal to that which is unseen and eternal. "I go," he says, "to prepare a place for you, but I come again to take you to myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." All this is going on at this moment; His heart is towards you, his occupation is about you, and thus it is from hour to hour. In the multitude of your thoughts, then, you may rejoice that you are raised up together with Christ, made to sit together in heavenly places with Christ; and that because he lives you live also.

We do not think very much about that which is within the veil; yet we do think of these invisible things, in a measure, because it is to them that our hope relates, "which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that which is within the veil." At this moment you are hoping for nothing less than personal intercourse with Christ—for nothing less than personal assimilation to Christ—for an intercourse with him which shall be perfect in its nature, and never-ending in its duration. Within the veil you might see Christ leading your brethren to the fountains of living water; here you may think of him as doing it; you there might see him giving them to eat of the tree of life. Think of him as did the two disciples after the walk from Emmaus, "Did not our hearts burn within us?" How must the hearts of the ransomed in paradise burn within them as he is talking with them now!—opening to them the scriptures still, and disclosing to them the glory which he had with the Father before the foundation of the world! You cannot see all this or hear it; but you can, to some extent, realize it through faith upon these representations; and, believing that such things are, you hope that they will be for you. Your hope does not make you ashamed. This is a hope which, when once possessed, doth connect its possessor with things which eye hath not seen, ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive of them. Men and brethren, let us gird up the loins of our mind, and hope on even to the end!

In the third place, let us observe that this hope acts as an anchor to the soul. It is not mere sentimentalism but, as hinted in our text, a thing of the most powerful efficacy without which men, in this world, could not live. It is called the "anchor of the soul." This leads us to think of the sea, of storms and tempests, and of some gallant vessel which, in order to be saved from the storm must have all the appliances of deliverance, safety, and defence. Have you never seen such a vessel when suddenly a storm has come down upon her, and she has been unable to get out to sea? They then let go the anchor, as the only hope, the sole remaining chance of escape. Suppose the anchor drags, what then? Suppose it parts from the cable which unites it to the ship? Suppose the anchor breaks? The doom of the ship is sealed; for the anchor is everything; and this hope, which is so beautifully compared to the anchor, is everything to the Christian. Your trials and perplexities are not only like a storm, but as a storm from which you cannot get away. You cannot run before it. You cannot take advantage of a wider berth by getting out to sea. There is no alternative; you must "ride it out." You have often, doubtless, experienced this. These things have so come upon you as to suggest this figure to your minds; it has been as the storm beating mercilessly upon you, while you could not possibly get away. Mark, for instance, the calumnies with which good men are so frequently assailed! Consider the manifold disappointments which oftentimes undermine your comfort. Sometimes you have been troubled with tormenting thoughts about God's holiness

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and your sinfulness—"all God's waves and billows have gone over you." Why? Because your conscience tells you of your guilt, of the law of God's holiness, and the wicked one is putting these thoughts before you, endeavouring to lead you captive at his will! There you are, though perhaps no one but God is aware of what is going on; but there, in the multitude of your thoughts within you, there is a perfect tempest, such as you hardly know how to bear up under! But you cannot run from it; there you must remain. What would you do, under such circumstances, but for your hope that you have an interest in the great salvation? What could you do without it? I do not wonder that the Bible calls it a "living," "blessed," and "glorious hope." How often have you and I been saved from making shipwreck, thus far, of our profession and consistency by reverting yet once more to the everlasting covenant which "is ordered in all things and sure!"

Men and brethren, do not I speak what some of you know, when I say that this expression, "the anchor of the soul" is true to fact? As I have said oftentimes no one but yourself is conscious of your troubles; they are of such a character as that you could not communicate them, even to your bosom friend. You can tell no one what you are suffering. There may be dark and deep temptations even about the very existence of a God—sore and heavy tests of your conviction that he reigneth and ruleth in the armies of heaven and on earth. There under a calm exterior, even amidst all the charities of the domestic circle—even amidst the more sacred charities of the Christian church—at the very table of the Lord—there may have been passing within your breast a struggle, which can only be likened unto a tempest, and the recollection of which, at this moment, causes you to tremble. What would you have done then without this hope? Everything else had absolutely failed you, but the hope which God had implanted is a hope which doth not "make ashamed," and it stood by you. Shall I not describe something like the process when I say this was it? You were tempted to despair, or to some dark and secret crime it may be. And let no ungodly man say in scorn, "Ah! what are the saints tempted thus?" Verily, and indeed they are. Christians know that the great adversary comes in like a flood till they have sometimes feared lest they should give way; but this hope has saved them. Am I not a child of God? Have I not some reason to hope that I am a partaker of the divine nature? Am I not loved with a love that is inalienable, defended by a power that is Almighty, and interested in a covenant which is ordered in all things and sure? Have I not therefore some reason to hope? This, and nothing but this, has led you patiently to hold on, notwithstanding all the pressure of the storm; this has kept you when nothing else could have kept you. You trusted that God would interpose, and that, somehow or other, you would obtain relief.

I do believe that the Christian experience of this congregation will respond to my statement, when I say, that these clouds of darkness have been surrounding you on every hand, but there has been, in the midst of all this tempest-tossed experience, the conviction—however feeble, that God would not let you go after all. Never has he deceived you, when relying on his own declaration—"The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him, and *in them that hope in his mercy.*" Our illustrious countryman and fellow Christian, Wilberforce, (I think you will find the account in his "Diary" somewhere,) on one occasion when cast down in this way, in the midst of some of the turmoil he had to endure, not knowing what to do, wrote down this text—

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"The Lord hath pleasure in them that fear him, and hope in his mercy." Since I read this, I have never forgotten it ; and it may be that you will never forget it. If you can only hold on by your hope, however feebly, you will be saved thereby. Your hope is specific, and well defined ; it is a glorious hope, it is not simply poetical, sentimental, and inoperative ; but a practical working day thing which every Christian has had to use a thousand times and will have to use more and more.

In the fourth place, I observe, that this anchor to your soul will never fail. It is "sure and stedfast." Look at these two words : the word "sure" refers to hope itself, and the word "stedfast" to that which the hope relates to. Hence, then, we have the anchor, and the anchorage. The hope of the good man, in itself considered, is sure ; no matter what the "strain" upon it—no matter what the amount of pressure ; it is strong and infrangible. It was originated by the "God of hope," it is sustained and guarded by him, and therefore it cannot be broken. It is a sure thing.

But, my brethren—to revert to what we have felt—how often has the hope of the good man been ruthlessly and most remorselessly put to the test ! How often has it come to pass that he has had to school himself, and that with great severity ? "Why art thou cast down, O my soul ? and why art thou disquieted within me ?" Have you not known the serene termination of it all ? "Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance and my God." And so it has proved itself to be sure in that though the soul has been "disquieted within," there has been that beautiful soliloquy—"Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him." So things will remain, even unto the end. No man here can tell what the experience of another day, or another hour may be—

"Like a wild deluge, cares may come,
And storms of sorrow fall."

It may be that God will allow you and me to be enshrouded in obscurity more than we have ever experienced before. The good man, though tossed with tempest, and not comforted, shall nevertheless be kept from making a shipwreck of his faith, and good conscience. The material of which his hope is composed is divine, and its construction is divine. The God of hope will take care that "as thy day so shall thy strength be." We have heard men say, "What shall we do in an extremity like this ?" But the answer is explicit enough—"My grace is sufficient for thee;" and the hope which is of God's own implantation, is a hope which will never fail. It is, in itself considered, inviolable, and indestructible. God created it, and he will take care that it shall never be destroyed, we will therefore rejoice in it.

But, moreover, it is not only "sure," it is also "stedfast." The former, as I have said, referred to the anchor itself, this latter related to the anchorage. "Stedfast," i.e. it has laid hold of that which will not let go. This seems to have been the apostle's thought. An anchor, you know, although it may not break, may drag. Its material and construction may be the very best, still there may be nothing like a tenacious bottom in which to imbed itself. There may be none of the "bars of the earth," as Jonah calls them, upon which it may get hold ; and therefore in the extremity—at the

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very crisis, their doom is sealed for want of anchorage ! Now the anchorage of your hope will never let the anchor drag. If I were asked what this anchorage is—and let it be asked, for we had better get to be familiar with all these great truths—if I were asked what it is that constitutes this anchorage of the good man's hope—that is to say, what will be the resisting force to act against the stress and strain to which it may be exposed—I should say it has laid hold of the “exceeding great and precious promises, which are all yea and amen in Christ Jesus.” It has laid hold of the everlasting covenant which “is ordered in all things and sure.” It has laid hold of the tree of life which is in the midst of the paradise of God. It has laid hold of the Rock of Ages. It has laid hold of the “two immutable things by which God swears and cannot lie.” It has laid hold of the foundation of God which standeth “sure,” and against which “the gates of hell shall not prevail.” It has entered into that which is within the veil, and embedded itself deep down into the divine purposes, and enwrapped itself around the divine all-sufficiency, and taken hold—with its firm, broad, seven-fold gigantic grasp—of the great high throne, which is from everlasting—the throne of God and of the Lamb, and *that throne itself must drag*, ere your anchor will come home ! It has entered there, and there it will keep, so that *now* you may safely say—

“*Let cares like a wild deluge come
And storms of sorrow fall.*”

My anchorage is good, and so I will be glad. Why should we not delight ourselves in these great privileges presented by our heavenly Father ? Me-thinks I see some tempted, troubled Christian, tempest-tossed and threatened, as he thinks, with the shipwreck of his own profession, and as he sometimes fears, with the everlasting ruin of his soul. Evil spirits as they look on do rejoice in that jeopardy. And fellow Christians, if they are aware of it, look and tremble. Now the storm comes on fiercer and fiercer still ; it is as though you must certainly be lost ; now the world, the flesh and the devil, seem sure of success. Some by-stander may say, “let the light break in upon that portentous darkness when the storm subsides, and you will see he has not been able to ride it out. He has founder'd this time. He is gone.” Let the light break in upon the darkness, and there he is still ! His anchor was God's own production, and it was “sure ;” his anchorage was God's own covenant, and it has been “stedfast.” So it will be in weathering remaining storms, and by and by the last will come. This is a mercy. The region of tempests is only on this side the veil ; there are no storms “within the veil.” The last opportunity of using this anchor will speedily arrive. And what then ? you will get up your anchor, and, like a ship in full sail, with all her crew and passengers in safety, bearing indeed manifold indications of storms and tempests undergone, but safely weathered, with everything in its proper place—in this condition you will have an entrance ministered unto you abundantly, into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We shall not be “saved, some on boards and some upon broken pieces of the ship ;” but, faithful unto death, God will fulfil all he has promised, and so we shall be admitted into his presence, “where there is fulness of joy, and to his right hand where there are treasures for ever more.” “Which hope we

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have as an anchor of the soul, sure and stedfast, which entereth into that which is within the veil, where we have a forerunner, even our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ." I do not wonder at the apostle saying just before, "Whereas God willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsels, confirmed them by an oath, that, by two immutable things in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation"—not merely a small or an ordinary measure of consolation, but a strong consolation.

And what are the appliances to which we are to have recourse? They are simple. No man can go from this service and say—"That is all well enough very gratifying to the audience, but he did not tell me how a plain man like myself could get hold of it." The thing is written as with a sunbeam so that every man may understand. I say yet again, that we who rejoice in this hope, and who feel as if this morning it had been invigorated—we did not get it by any mysterious unintelligible process. We simply took God at his word, doing what his book directs, and believing what he has promised therein. In this way we have come into the enjoyment of the privilege and we would fain have you to enjoy it too. There is but one way, and you do not want any other; for this way is simple and accessible to *all* who will flee for refuge to the hope which is set before them in the gospel. You cannot earn, purchase, or merit it; yet you may *all* have it as God's free and undeserved communication through Jesus Christ our Lord. It brought him from heaven, and it will take you to heaven. Your business is to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved.

Well then, take this exhortation and act upon it; and then you may take all the promises and rest upon them, till we arrive—

"Where we shall see his face,
And never, never sin;
And from the rivers of his grace,
Drink endless pleasures in."

The following Nos. of the Penny Pulpit contain Sermons delivered at Exeter Hall.

- 1,700, The Great Exhibition, by the Rev. T. Binney.
- 1,701, The Gift of God, by the Hon. and Rev. B. W. Noel, M.A.
- 1,703, The Prodigal's Return, by the Rev. W. Brock.
- 1,706, The City of Refuge, by the Rev. J. Beaumont, M.D.
- 1,710, The Truth, by the Rev. J. Aldis.
- 1,711, Wisdom's Invitation, by the Rev. G. Smith.
- 1,713, Looking to Christ, by the Rev. J. Hamilton, D.D.
- 1,714, Why will ye die? by the Rev. J. Stoughton.
- 1,717, The Gospel, by the Rev. Luke Tyerman.
- 1,718, The Testimonies of God, by the Rev. T. Archer, D.D.
- 1,720—21, The Book for all Nations, and all Times, by the Rev. J. C. Miller.
- 1,724, Salvation, by the Rev. G. Clayton.
- 1,725, The difficulties of speculative Inquiry, by the Rev. J. H. Hinton, A.M.
- 1,728, The Final Judgment, by the Rev. John Burnet.
- 1,729, The Desire of all Nations, by the Rev. H. Cooke, D.D.
- 1,733, Witnessing to the Truth, by the Rev. C. Stovel.
- 1,738, Things Temporal, by the Rev. S. Martin.

(To be continued.)

THE POWER OF FAITH AND PRAYER.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY EVENING, JUNE 29, 1851,

BY THE REV. WILLIAM CHALMERS,

(Of Marylebone Presbyterian Church,)

AT EXETER HALL.

"Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman great is thy faith; be it unto thee even as thou wilt."—Matthew xv. 28.

We are told in the close of the preceding chapter, that, immediately before the events recorded in the passage before us, our Lord was in Gennesaret. There, with his usual compassion, He had been healing all manner of diseases, and with an ever burning zeal in his Father's cause, He had been shedding around him the light and influence of his holy doctrines, when Scribes and Pharisees, apparently sent from Jerusalem to watch him, made him the object of their envenomed attacks. Against these he defended himself with divine dignity, and force; labouring by his cutting reproofs, his powerful teaching, and his mighty works to overcome the unbelief and hardness of their hearts. But he seems to have laboured in vain; and hence, saddened, it may be, by his painful experience of their incorrigible blindness and perversity, he appears for a season determined to withdraw himself from their reach, and, following the advice which he had just given to his disciples, to "let them alone." And as if to prefigure the future casting away of the Jews and the calling of the Gentiles, the removal of the blessings of the covenant from the former and the bestowing of them on the latter, as we are told in the twenty-first verse of this chapter, "He went thence"—that is from Judea—"and departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon." But in this case, as afterwards, the "diminishing of the Jews was the riches of the Gentiles." For when his infatuated countrymen spurned his doctrine, and shut their eyes against his heavenly radiance—"The land of Zabulon, and the land of Naphtali, which is by the way of the sea beyond Jordan, Gallilee of the Gentiles, the people that sat in darkness saw a great light, and to those that dwelt in the region and shadow of death light sprang up!"

It is true, indeed, that, acting on the principle of confining his personal ministry to his own people, having left Judea he manifested a desire to remain in concealment; and hence Mark tells us, in the parallel passage, that "he entered into a house, and would have no man know it." Being among the Gentiles he did not proclaim that salvation which he offered freely to the Jews. But even here his fame had preceded him, and he sought for privacy in vain. Even in this land of heathenish ignorance Jesus of Nazareth was known to be "a Prophet, mighty in word and in deed," and "he could not be hid." The sin of unbelief had driven him from among his countrymen, the Jews, and threatened for a time to leave him in obscurity, but, as if to compensate for the indignity thus offered him, the grace of faith awaited and welcomed his arrival among the Gentiles, and by its matchless power over the Saviour's heart, in spite of himself, drew him forth from his wished for secrecy, (verse 22.)—"For, behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto him, saying, have mercy on me, O Lord, thou son of David."

The individual whose remarkable faith was honoured with this signal victory over the Saviour was a woman; not however one of those highly favoured persons who, as they ministered to the wants of Jesus, witnessed his miracles, and were taught by his words. In all likelihood she had never before beheld the Lord. Mark tells us she was a Greek, that is, a Gentile, and in consequence by birth "an alien from the commonwealth of Israel and a stranger to the covenant of promise." Further, she was "a Syrophenician by nation," that is, a native of that part of Phoenicia which had been conquered by the Syrians—the country in which Tyre and Sidon stood—a land then polluted with the most abominable idolatries. And not only this, she was a Canaanite—the descendant of a race

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whom God himself had exiled from their country, and branded with a curse. Still in this barren wilderness she bloomed a very plant of paradise. For this despised outcast was taught of God; she had heard of Jesus; she had identified him with that Messiah, whom somehow she had learned to have been promised to the Jews, and in whom though a Gentile, she had set her faith and hope; and believing that he would in no wise cast out any who came to him, she resolved in the hour of her necessity to implore his mercy. Strong in the deep impulses of a mother's love she set forth to seek him; she entered the house where he was sitting; and with a bursting heart, faith, hope, fear, humility, a mother's agony struggling within her breast, she cried unto him, saying, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou son of David."

The object of her solicitude was her young daughter, then labouring under a most terrible infliction. By a severe dispensation in the providence of God, frequently permitted for wise and important purposes, during our Lord's residence on earth, the child was in the possession, and under the control of an unclean spirit, which dwelling in her bodily frame, engrossed and demonized all her powers, making every sense the organ of its impiety, and every limb the tortured victim of its horrid cruelty. "My daughter is grievously vexed with a devil." And the language of this parent is expressive of the deepest feeling: for, though she needs no help, no mercy for herself, yet such was the grasp which early sickness and sorrow had given her child upon this mother's love, that she pleads its case as if the case had been her own—"Have mercy upon me, O Lord." Parents! mark ye here, how love to your offspring, if genuine and wise, will ever show itself in fervent prayers on their behalf. It will never be satisfied with the mere feelings of nature; it will vent itself in earnest supplications to the God of grace.

Observe too the terms of this woman's application. She addresses Christ as "the Son of David." This you know was the title usually given by the Jews to the promised Messiah, and doubtless it would often be found in their mouths—just because they were so familiar with it—unaccompanied by any sound understanding of the person and office of him to whom they applied it. But when this Gentile woman, whom mere habit could not have taught to use expressions that were purely Jewish, entitles Christ "the Son of David," are we not warranted in regarding her as formally acknowledging him to be that glorious Messiah of whom ancient prophecy had sung, as "the rod out of the stem of Jesse," to whom the Gentiles should seek.

And, mark how she directs her prayer towards what constitutes the principle objects of true and saving faith—the main pillars on which every sinner's hope is built—towards the *power* and the *grace* of Christ. The greatness of his *power* she owns by claiming its aid against the infernal spirit; and the riches of his *grace* she acknowledges, by using no argument to move him to its exercise, by making her own and her daughter's wretchedness her only plea.

One would expect that such an application as this,—so tender, so humble, so earnest; containing so decided an acknowledgment of his divine mission; springing from so undoubted a confidence in his grace and power; breathing the language of parental affection, so genuine and wise; and having for its object the relief of misery so real and appalling—would have met with an immediate and favourable reply; but says the evangelist, (verse 23.)—"he answered her not a word." Nay, it would seem from the language of his disciples, "she crieth after us," that, as if to get rid of her importunity, he actually rose and left the house in which he had been sitting, and turning his back upon the poor suppliant, proceeded with his disciples on his journey. How strange and discouraging this conduct! How unlike that prodigality of mercy, when crowds were healed as they came! His power often exercised when unasked, is now denied when fervently implored. Who would have looked for such treatment at the hands of the "man of sorrows," who by suffering had learned sympathy! Who could have expected such silence and neglect from him who said, "come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest!" "What might this woman naturally have thought within herself! 'Is this the reception I meet with from one whose benevolence is upon the tongues of all? Can this be in very deed the Messiah, sent to heal the broken-hearted? Methinks a case like mine might have excited some sympathy, might have called forth

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some compassionate inquiries. Alas! if he has any favours at all to bestow, he reserves them for his own people. Against others the fountain of his mercy is sealed. A woman, a mother in distress, appeals to him in vain.

Ah! but what will not true faith encounter ere it will impeach the character of Christ and call in question the riches of his grace! And very different were the thoughts and feelings of this believing Gentile. Had her faith been weak, the refusal to help her would have been ascribed to inability to do so; had her spirit been lofty she would have resented it as an insult, and have asked no more. But, though not of Israel, she was a "mother in Israel;" great in faith, humility, patience; and our Lord was wisely silent, else we had not seen the trial and the triumph of that faith which is "more precious than gold, tried in the fire;" we had not known the encouragement, or heard the call which here so loudly sounds to "go and do likewise."

Meantime, as she continued her importunities, the disciples, touched with compassion, interpose on her behalf; (verse 23) they "came and besought him, saying, send her away for she crieth after us." "Send her away:" they meant with a favourable answer—for this the words of Christ that follow, imply; still they expressed their meaning strangely. The likelihood is that they were wondering at the unusual demeanour of their Lord. They knew not what to think of it. They could not venture to say how surprised they were at it. And, hence like men not daring to speak out their inward feelings, they put their entreaty in wrong language.

But what answer did our Lord make to his disciples? He met their request by saying, (verse 24,) "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." These words, though strictly in reply to his disciples, were doubtless uttered in the hearing of the woman, and as she must have caught with eagerness at their aid, how fitted was this reply of Christ to dash every hope which she had formed into the very dust.

When a man of wisdom and firmness not only refuses your request, but assigns a reason for doing so, you all know that it is seldom of avail to press him further. And this to all appearance was the present case; for what does the answer of our Lord at first sight appear to be, but a defence of his former silence and seeming neglect—an expression of his determination to adhere to the same. It was as if he had said; 'Your advocacy is vain. How can I grant the prayer of this Gentile, seeing I am not sent but to my countrymen the Jews—"The lost sheep of the house of Israel."

But here, the reflecting hearer will naturally ask—How does this answer of Christ, which seems to limit his commission to the Jewish people, agree with the language of ancient prophecy? Was it not said of old that in Messiah "all the nations of the earth should be blessed?" and that Christ was to be "a light to lighten the Gentiles," as well as the Jews? With what truth and propriety then could our Lord here say, "I am not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel?" The solution of the difficulty is a very simple one. It is this. Our Lord spoke in reference to his own personal ministry, while the prophecies we have quoted refer to the influence and effects of his mediatorial work in general. For reasons which we cannot at present enter into, while the blessings of the gospel were ultimately designed to be universal, "and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of God," Christ's own individual ministry, and personal mission—that is, the teaching of his own lips, and the labours of his own hands—were to the Jews only; and it was not till after his resurrection that, the partition wall being broken down, the blessings of the gospel were fully and freely offered to the Gentiles. But while this was the general rule, there was nothing to prevent his occasionally departing from it. The fact of his being under obligation only to the Jews, did not preclude him from showing mercy when he pleased to the Gentiles; so that his answer to his disciples—"I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel"—while it asserted an undoubted truth, still presented only one side of the truth—just that side indeed which fell in with all the Jewish notions and prejudices of the disciples, and effectually stopped their intercession on behalf of this Gentile woman—but still a truth which did not bear directly upon her particular case. The fact that our Lord was not sent but to the Jews was no reason in itself why he should not receive and bless those Gentiles that came to

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him. His answer, therefore, while most fitted to discourage this woman, was not intended as a denial of her prayer; but, as the result shows, it was only used as a weapon with which to prove the keenness of her knowledge and the temper of her faith.

In all likelihood, this heaven-taught suppliant penetrated the meaning of the Saviour; for the eye of faith is quick and piercing, where that of unbelief is closed and blind. But in whatever light she may have understood his words, it is certain she did not regard them as containing a final refusal. On the contrary, they were like oil cast on the flames. And she draws near once more, prefacing her renewed application with an act of worship. To a wonderful degree she had entered into the secrets of Christ's mysterious nature, and pierced, as though by the intuition of some blessed instinct, through the veil in which he was shrouded. Her faith laid its hold at once upon his very God-head, and his true humanity. As God, she fell before him and worshipped; as man, she appealed to his fellow feeling for the sorrows of the human heart. Formerly she had addressed him as David's son; now she bows before him as David's Lord; prostrate at her feet she adores, and saying nothing of his commission, throws herself on his compassion. (Verse 25)—“Then came she and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me.” The words are few, but full of meaning. It was as if she had said, ‘Lord, I cannot dispute with thee, nor answer thee one in a thousand of thine arguments. I can only say that my case is a very wretched one, and my help is alone in thee. Thou canst save to the uttermost, wherefore Lord, help me. If thou art sent to the lost, then I am lost. It is thine as Messiah to “deliver the needy when they cry, the poor also, and him that hath no helper.” Though thou hidest it in thine heart, I know that this is with thee. I will not let thee go except thou bless me.’

Surely, now, you will say her prayer was granted. No; strange to tell, her importunity only procures for her fresh discouragement. To injury Christ now seems to add insult, and to spurn her from his feet. He replies in the words of Mark, “Let the children first be filled;” for, (verse 26)—“It is not meet to take the children's bread and to cast it to the dogs.” Observe here the remarkable terms by which our Lord characterizes the Jews and the Gentiles respectively. He does not use the words “children” and “dogs,” because they were the current phraseology of the day. He was far from wishing to countenance the disdainful spirit with which the Jew looked down upon his Gentile brother, and which the latter has since so fearfully retorted upon the former. But estimating, as well as he could do, the magnitude of the privileges enjoyed by those who were within the pale of the church, who had called from infancy on Jehovah's name, and borne the sign and seal of Jehovah's righteousness, “whose were the adoption and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; whose were the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came”—estimating these privileges to be great and ennobling; and then contrasting them with the condition of the Gentiles, left in God's mysterious sovereignty, to grope in outer darkness, and dead in trespasses and sins, to perish without God and without hope in the world: he felt that he could most aptly express their comparative rank in relation to God, by likening the former, the Jews, to a man's children, and the latter, the Gentiles, to his dogs. “By the children's bread,” are meant those peculiar blessings which the Messiah came to bestow; and when the Lord Jesus says, that with this bread the children must first be filled, and that it was not meet to cast it to dogs, the general import of the declaration is, that before the blessings of salvation were offered to the Gentiles, to those who were without the visible church, they must first have been fully and freely laid before the Jews, and that because to the former, the Gentiles, they were a gift; but to the latter, the Jews, they were a birthright, in virtue of that oath which God had sworn to their father Abraham. Hence said Paul to his unbelieving countrymen, “it was necessary that we should first have spoken unto you, but seeing that ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo we turn to the Gentiles.”

These words of our Lord seem at first sight to contain so decided a refusal of

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this Canaanite's petition, that were it not for what we have already seen of the energy of her faith, we might almost expect to hear of her no more. But mark how she met this apparently final, nay, contemptuous rejection of her prayer. Did she sink down into the gloomy silence of despair, or, rising from the ground, did she give vent to her indignant and wounded feelings by hurling at the Saviour loud and passionate complaints? A proud unhumbled heart would have done so. But she was a woman, "poor, and broken in spirit, that trembled at God's word;" and hers in meekness and in patience was the ever memorable reply, (verse 27)—"Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table."

This answer is like some delicate piece of workmanship, which we can scarcely touch without injuring its texture. Still, at the risk of doing so, we must examine it a little more closely. And three qualities of mind which lie at the foundation of Christian character, were powerfully indicated by it—Spiritual Discernment, Humility, and Faith.

Mark her *spiritual discernment*. With a penetration and sagacity in any one excellent, in a Gentile, marvellous, and manifestly the fruit of Divine teaching, she perceives and fixes upon the only outlet of Christ's mercy towards her. She states, with an accuracy which is perfectly beautiful, the footing on which the Gentiles, before the full establishment of the Christian church and dispensation, were made partakers of the grace of God, and then she claims to be received upon it. The Gentiles had no covenant title to the grace of God. It was not offered them. The table was not spread for their wants. Yet, at no period of the Jewish economy, if perceiving their need and the bountifulness of God, the sons and daughters of the stranger humbly sought a share; if believing there was enough for all, they were willing to crouch, as it were, beneath the children's board, and pick up the fragments and the crumbs that fell therefrom, at no period, were they cast off, they were received with an approving smile. "It is not meet to take the children's bread," said our Lord, "and to cast it to dogs." "Truth, Lord;" she replies, "Yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table. Was not this to be of "quick understanding in the fear of the Lord."

But the reply was dictated by admirable *humility* and *faith*. Our Lord had entitled her a dog—a name expressive in her country of all that was vile and base. She denies not the propriety of the charge. Believing that God had constituted such a difference in the rank of the Jew and the Gentile, as justified the term applied to either, she was content to submit to the humiliating comparison; and feeling that for her own ignorance and unworthiness no reproachful language could be too strong, she meekly takes the place allotted her, yet from this very place as from a vantage ground, she urges her suit. The rebuke she converts into a claim; the reproach cast at her she turns into a plea; a cogent argument is made to spring from a contemptuous repulse; she grasps the hand that is outstretched against her; she snatches the very weapon wielded against her, and in this fight of faith she wields it for herself. 'Lord, thou art truth; thy words are truth. Thou hast entitled me a dog, and such I am. Give me then the wonted privilege of a dog. Deal with me as such. Let me but gather up some crumbs of mercy from beneath the table where thy children sit. That I am a dog is my misery, and therefore just the more commends me to thy mercy. Thy power is infinite, thy compassion none can fathom. The blessing which is as a feast to me, is but as crumbs to thee. There is bread enough in the Father's house, and to spare.'

But now the end was gained for which the exercise of Divine compassion was delayed. Her warfare was accomplished and the battle won. The kingdom of heaven is taken by the power of faith. There was in her heart a hidden treasure which was thus brought forth. There was in it fine gold, to which this hour of agony had been as the refiner's fire. With difficulty had our Lord repressed the big emotions with which his bosom heaved. But now he can restrain himself no longer, and his admiration and delight break forth in the impassioned exclamation which follows, (verse 28)—"O woman, great is thy faith;" "I can refuse thee nothing; thy wishes alone shall bound my grace, "be it even unto thee even as thou wilt." Secretly and silently the word of the Lord went forth; Satan recognised the Messenger, and instantly fled; the

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prey was taken from the mighty, and the captive from the strong—"Her daughter was made whole from that very hour." And who but a mother, who but a *Christian* mother can tell those feelings, whose only language could be tears, with which on returning to her home, this affectionate parent pressed to her embrace her lost, but now recovered child.

From this subject many important lessons may be drawn which our limited time forbids us to pursue. But the leading practical conclusion we may not forego. And it is this—the *irresistible efficacy of true faith and persevering prayer*. We join them together because of their inseparable connection. True faith will always open the mouth in fervent prayer—the one is but the voice of the other. Now, of the resistless efficacy of faith and prayer we have a most signal example in the text. It exhibits to us a fellow sinner wielding an engine of matchless power, apparently triumphing by means of it over God himself, and wresting a blessing, as it were, from the hands of the reluctant Saviour. And the question naturally occurs—Is this an engine with which we have anything to do? Are we in such circumstances as to require its aid or to be benefitted by its exercise? Yes brethren we are. There is a striking similarity between the blessing which this woman sought for her offspring and the blessing which each one of us ought to seek for himself. Are we not all by nature, like this child, under the power of the devil? He is not now indeed permitted as of old to inhabit, and grievously to vex the bodies of men; but does he not still possess the spirits of the unrenewed, and rule with iron sway over their imperishable souls. Is he not the God of this world, and the ruler of its darkness? Does not that same evil spirit who when cast out of heaven, assailed the innocence and blessedness of paradise, and tearing them away, plunged our unhappy parents into an abyss of sin and misery, now work in the children of disobedience. Is not every unrenewed man his slave, led captive by Satan at his will? And what dominion is more absolute, what tyranny more oppressive, what bondage more galling than his? The condition of the most ignoble vassal is sweeter and less servile than that sinner. The worst thing about the captive is his chain. It is cold and heavy, unkindly to the touch, and grating to the ear; but it is his body, not his free-born mind that wears it. Alas! it is otherwise with fallen unrenewed man. The iron yoke of Satan is upon his noblest part—it is not the body that is the victim of his tyranny, it is the soul that is enslaved. It is the soul, whose lofty powers Satan has laid prostrate, and fettered with a chain. And are not the very children of light, in whom the power of Satan has been broken, fearfully exposed to his assaults, as he endeavours to regain his lost ascendancy, as he strives to lure them into his toils, or as he goes about like a roaring lion, seeking to devour them.

If God's word be true, these things are true, and can we be indifferent to so awful reality. Shall this Gentile woman be more earnest for the cure of a bodily distemper, than we for the cure of this malady of our souls. Shall Satan's power over the outer man be dreaded more than his tyranny over the inward spirit? A few short years, and the exhausted frame of this afflicted child must have sunk under the pressure of its agony, and been released from its tormentor. But the soul, it can never die. Happy or wretched it must be for ever. And if the demon spirit is not cast forth from it now, he will inhabit it for ever, he will be its lord and master, and it will be his slave and victim through all eternity within that prison, from which there is no redemption.

But while this narrative exhibits to you a case emblematic of your own—the victim of Satan's power and cruelty, it also commends to you the remedy, the means of recovery. It is in the exercise of faith, and persevering prayer that deliverance from the power of sin and Satan shall be achieved. And what is faith? Any mysterious, unattainable thing? What but the firm reliance of the soul upon the promised power and grace of Christ who was manifested to destroy the works of the devil. He has promised freely and unconditionally to do so in the case of each one of you, to deliver you from all the evils that are the wages of Satan's service, from all that pains or binds you. To the guilty he offers pardon, to the ignorant light, to the captive liberty, strength to the weak, riches to the poor, clothing to the naked, to the afflicted comfort, to the troubled on earth, rest in heaven. It is faith that takes him at his

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word, that receives the gift, and embraces the promise; that believes it shall be unto you as he hath said, and that tells him so by the voice of prayer, urging him to make his word and promise good. You see it exemplified by this woman. She had heard of Christ; that he was as willing to help as he was able to save. She came to him, in this persuasion of his grace and power. She implored the blessing which she needed. She would take no refusal. She sought with earnestness; she sought with perseverance; she sought with success. And, brethren, believe it, "Whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning," and in the exercise of the like faith, and the like fervent persevering prayer, the blessings which you most need shall, in the end, become your own.

But some may be disposed to ask, What warrant have we to put such confidence in the ability and willingness of the Saviour to help us? All are not the objects of his redeeming mercy. He was not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. How then can we know that we are of the number of the elect, and that Christ is sent to us? My friends, in asking such questions, you are interfering with secret things which belong to God, and treading on ground with which you have nothing to do. Is it not enough for you to know that Christ came to seek sinners, and you are sinners; that he came to bless the needy, and you are needy; that he offers salvation to the lost, and you are lost? Let not any such temptation drive you from the promise. Learn of this Gentile woman. The suggestion in your case that Christ is not sent to you, is of the evil one, that he may keep his hold of you; in her case it came from our blessed Lord himself, and yet her faith met and vanquished it. Do you really, earnestly, humbly seek for deliverance as he would give it you—deliverance from all the evils of sin, from its love and power, as well as from its punishment and curse. Then, from whom proceed all holy desires and affections, but from the Spirit of holiness? And hell would madden with exultation, and heaven would thrill with horror, were He to leave unsatisfied desires which himself had excited!

Again: you may say that you have sought these blessings long, but have not found them. You complain that you are still labouring under the fears of guilt; that sin still dwells within, and yields over you a fearful power; that your hearts are cold, and your affections earthly; and your prayers seemingly unanswered, and your exertions apparently fruitless, you are tempted to exclaim, "Why should we wait for the Lord any longer? It is vain to serve God, and what profit is there if we pray unto him." O say not so! Have not delays in answering prayer—delays long, and painfully protracted—been the experience and complaint of God's people in every age? Listen. "O that I knew where I might find him," and the patriarch, "that I might come even to his seat." "Thou coverest thyself with a cloud," says the prophet, "that our prayers should not pass through." And the Psalmist mournfully exclaims, "I am weary of my crying, mine eyes fail with while I wait for my God." But the fountain of his mercy is not dried up; there is a tongue which tells of mercy in his very silence. How much of love was there in Christ's heart towards this woman, when he seemed to heed her not; nay, when harshness and contempt were on his lips! He has gracious ends to serve by each delay in answering your petitions. It is to increase your importunity, and make you prize the blessing more; it is to wean you from all dependence on the creature, and draw you closer to himself. By wrestling with us, God strengthens us. By calling into exercise, he improves our Christian graces; our *faith*, when it is taught to trust God as a friend, even when he seems to come forth as an enemy; our *patience*, when it learns that "the times and the seasons, are in God's hands," and that his hour is the best; our *love* when it cleaves to God in the absence of felt enjoyments, and even in the way of his judgment can wait for him; our humility when it acknowledges that we deserve not the privileges of children, but the contumely of dogs. "Therefore," says the Psalmist, "it is good that a man should both hope, and quietly wait for the salvation of Israel."

Let no difficulties then discourage you, from applying to the Saviour. Let no delay in answering your petitions damp your faith, or shut your mouth from prayer. What so hopeless as the case of Jonah down in the heart of the unfathomable sea! "The waters compassed me about even to the soul: the depths

closed me round about; the weeds were wrapped about my head. I went down to the bottoms of the mountains; the earth with her bars was about me for ever." But mark his exercise—"Then I said, I am cast out of thy sight, yet will I look again toward thy holy temple." He did look again, and in due time his feet stood once more upon the dry and solid land! Where such reason in despair, as in the case of Lazarus? "Lord, he hath been dead four days;" but listen to our Saviour's words to Martha, "Said I not unto thee, that if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God." She did believe; and at the voice of Jesus, out of the heart of the earth, Lazarus came forth, and took his place, once more mongst living men:—examples these, which give a meaning to the language of the Psalmist, and encourage us in like circumstance to use it for ourselves—"Will the Lord cast off for ever? and will he be favourable no more? Is his mercy clean gone for ever? Doth his promise fail for ever more? Hath God forgotten to be gracious? Hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies? Then I said, this is my infirmity; but I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High."

Be diligent, then, in the use of the appointed means; and, like this woman, after each repulse, draw nearer yet to Christ. Continue instant in prayer; and let your prayer be the voice of faith; let it spring from an undoubted persuasion of the ability and readiness of Christ to help you. "Whatsoever things ye desire when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them." If, like this Gentile, you would pray with earnestness, with perseverance, with humility, with success, this must be the character of your prayer. Without such a faith in Christ's power and grace, your prayer cannot be earnest; for who will ask that from another which he does not believe him possess? It cannot be persevering, for who will continue to ask, unless he believes there is a disposition to give? It cannot be humble, for what is humility but the renunciation of all self-confidence, and the casting of a poor and helpless soul upon the Saviour, a willingness to take the place that belongs to us before God, and to be a debtor for ever to Sovereign grace? But, if such be your attitude, and such your prayers, success is certain. "The vision is for an appointed time, but at the end it will speak, and will not lie." It was not till the sun was going down that the Lord acknowledged the sacrifice of Abraham; and with you it may be evening tide ere it be light; but not one word that the Lord hath spoken concerning you shall fail—"Be it unto thee even as thou wilt," shall at last be his gracious reply. The prayer of faith shall save the soul!

And why? why is faith a weapon of such resistless power? Why is its prayer so keen of edge, as to hew its triumphant way through every barrier, and take heaven itself by storm? Is it from any inherent strength in the principle of faith itself, or any intrinsic virtue in its voice? Surely not. Faith is a mere state of mind. Prayer is the expression of strong desire. Whence then their overwhelming mastery?

The secret of it, brethren, lies in this—that God having freely promised salvation by Christ to sinners, when that promise is believed, and has become the foundation of trust on the part of any man, that its terms shall be accomplished, from that moment is the faithfulness of God engaged to make it good; nay, all his infinite perfections array themselves upon its side. Faith has invincible strength—because it lays hold of and engages on its behalf, and makes its own, divine strength. Faith can be powerless and ineffectual—only when the arm of Jehovah withers, and the truth of Jehovah fails.

What but omnipotence can uproot the everlasting hills, and hurl them into the bed of the ocean? That is the power of faith. It upheaves the mountains of our transgressions, and casts them into the depths of the sea. Whose but the Almighty's arm, when the standard of revolt was planted on the plains of heaven, and round it rallied the apostate spirits, whose but the Almighty's arm dashed those rebel down to hell? Such is now the power, such is still the victory of faith. For when its voice is heard to speak from the sinner's heart, again is Satan disenthroned; again is Lucifer, bright star of the morning, seen to fall like lightning from the heavens of his power; and again the song of praise is heard. "Now is the accuser of the brethren cast out; now is come salvation and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ." Amen.

THE CATHOLICITY OF THE GOSPEL.

A Lecture

DELIVERED ON TUESDAY EVENING, JULY 1, 1851,

BY THE REV. J. DIXON, D.D.,

(Of Birmingham.)

AT EXETER HALL.

Before the Young Men's Christian Association.

My dear friends: it would much more comport with my habits and taste to address you extemporaneously than to read to you a lecture. I feel much more at ease when I am using such powers as God has given me, without the embarrassment of notes, or written documents at all; and I should prefer that mode of address to-night. But I believe it is your custom to receive, to listen to, written lectures. I wish not to deviate from the custom of the society; but allow me to say that my embarrassment is not a fictitious thing at all, for nothing perplexes me so much as to write a lecture or a sermon, without writing it about four or five times too long. Now after I had written the document upon this desk, I submitted it to the inspection of two or three of my kind friends. One of them said it would take three hours and a-half to read, and the other said it would take four hours to read. Do not be alarmed; I am not going to read three hours and a-half, or four hours; I shall occupy your attention about the accustomed time, and not beyond that. It has been my work during the whole of the day, with the assistance of a friend, to curtail, to blot out, to pin ever so many sheets together, and in this way to prepare the matter within the compass of a reasonable time. I trust you will bear with this prefatory observation; and now allow me as well as I can to proceed.

The Catholicity of the Gospel is the theme we have announced as the subject of our lecture. But wherefore adopt this as the topic of discourse? The answer is, there are circumstances in which it seems desirable to look away from our sectional, our denominational and our sectarian Christianity, to its general truths, its spiritual economy, its heavenly priesthood, its hidden and universal provisions, its administration in other than human hands, its contemplated result in the renovation and happiness of the world, its religious brotherhood of all classes, all nations, all colours, all languages, and all political and social grades; in fine, the union of all men in one sublime temple, radiant with the light of eternal truth, joyous with a song of redemption, holy through the sanctification of the Spirit, and rendering a believing a willing, and a complete homage to God's eternal Son. But is this a suitable arena for such a discussion? What is our society? It is the Young Men's Christian Association. The young men, the life, the hope, the strength, the promise of our manhood—the young men of this period occupy a connecting position; they belong to two races—the past and the future; they take up, they grasp the thread put into their hands by the past; and to them belongs the task of binding it to the future. The past is most glorious. The past not glorious? Great works in literature, in science, in the arts, in civilization, in legislation, in political

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justice, in religion, have been achieved by the generation now sinking into oblivion. The young men of the age cannot despise the old men of the age. They have done much to their hands; they have removed much rubbish, felled the trees of the forest, thrown up the soil, deposited the seeds and plants of future harvests; they have made our language vocal with the finest melody of song; they have grasped by a creative fancy the beauties, the sublimities, the mysterious agencies, the profound depths, the revealed truths, the hidden and glorious realities of the invisible state, and have thrown their creations of elevated genius into a national poetry in which all may well rejoice; they have enlarged the domain of science, of criticism, of natural philosophy, of economical and political knowledge, of all the arts of social life, and the means of improvement by popularizing truth, stripping it of its technical phraseology, and bringing it within the reach of all. But the departing generation have not only written; they have acted. May we not say they have filled our annals with noble deeds? England is better than it was; and how can it have become better but by the wisdom, the patriotism, the labours, the public virtue and the Christian piety, of her children? But let us speak more expressly of religion and the kingdom of God. The men of the past have not done what they ought, but they have laid a foundation for the time to come. They have enlarged the area of the Christian Church in its different professions to a great extent; they have sent out the word of God to testify of itself, of God, of Jesus Christ, of salvation, and to teach mankind their true origin, their rights, their noble powers, their high and glorious destiny. The triumphs of Biblical research and Biblical enthusiasm will be attributed to the men of the past. Great issues result from these. Can the voice of God in his own word be in vain? Can it be unheeded? This seems impossible. Is it too much to suppose that his glorious counsels, his stupendious providence, his sovereign will, his infinite love, are all connected with this near universal promulgation of his divine law? Is it too much to imagine that Christ upon his throne is by these means turning over a new page in the little book held in his hand which no one but himself is able to open? Is it too much to believe that the great redemption wrought out by the death of the Son of God, is destined by these means to receive a practical fulfilment in the emancipation of the human race from the fearful thraldom in which it has so long been involved, and to pass into a new and a brighter period? And although the world appears agitated, disturbed, in conflict with many of the antiquated notions and institutions, is it not likely that the light of the sacred oracles is beginning to break the sleep of ages, to put men in motion, to elicit inquiry, to cause them to question many of the opinions patented by age, and to cause them to ask, in the midst of opening dawn, What is truth? As the light of day penetrates all things, so must the divine word; but this cannot take effect without disturbance. As the truth of God enters the human mind it must be transferred to real life, to society, to institutions, to legislation, to nationalities, to ecclesiastical systems. How can men act upon their new and scriptural convictions towards their fellow-men, without being brought into collision with all the abominations of society; all that is impure, carnal, earthly, sensual in human nature itself, is at once carried to its very depths; despotism trembles on its throne as the lightnings of heaven flash; and the voice of God is heard in the thunders of his word; antichristian systems rock and vibrate in the upheavings of the earth on which they lean for support; privileged orders founded on selfishness and usurpation will resist as they see their prescriptive monopolies pass away, and their honours shared by others whom they have long been taught to consider as proscribed by God; and as Pilate and Herod agreed to persecute Jesus, though they agreed in nothing else, it is to be expected that all interested parties will combine to maintain their own predominance, and as far as possible prevent the enfranchisement of the world in the common ranks of Christianity. Hence the old men of the past are handing to the young men of the present two things—a truth and a contest, a banner and a conflict. The truth left by a dying age to living men, by the old men to young men, is Christianity; not the little instincts of sectarianism, not the mere defence of creed

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and dogmas, unless they agree with the catholicity of the Bible, not the zeal of partisans who can see no good, no piety, no truth, except in their own enclosures. The men of the Bible Society did not mean this; they meant Christianity itself as found in the Holy Word. This is the legacy handed by old men to young men. Will they take it up? Will they receive the deposit? Will they clasp the sacred treasure to their hearts? This Association is your guarantee; it is the combination of young men. Will you hold the trust fast, —that of Christianity itself? The trust is great. The embodiment of this idea is full of hope. Young and ardent minds are the minds to act; old men never attempt new enterprises. Hope fades with life and energy. They can only work in the beaten track; if they can faithfully fulfil their own mission, it is as much as can be expected of them. The more faithful you are, my dear young friends, the more tender and sympathetic, devout and spiritual, and, above all, the more zealous and decided in aggressive efforts, the more opposition and hostility must be expected. And may we not ask of what use can societies, unions, associations and aggregations of Christians be, whether young or old, unless they firmly and charitably act upon the aggressive? Christianity is an absolute truth; it cannot be held as a neutral indifferent matter. He who knows it, who enjoys it, who has been saved by it, and who has consecrated himself to Christ, is under every obligation, which nothing can evade, to make it known, to propagate the immortal seed, to diffuse the hallowed leaven, to build up the temple, and do his utmost to cause the sacred oracle to be heard by all people. This we conceive to be the duty of the young of the present time. Now in commanding the Bible and Bible truth to the men of this age, we commend our theme—the Catholicity of the Gospel.

What, then, is catholicity? Where is it to be found? Is there such a truth? We answer, there is, and it is to be found in Christianity itself. We believe Christianity to be universal, to be the moral system of the universe, to be God's own religion, to be the law, the economy, the great principle on which he deals with mankind; that he knows no other way, he applies no other agencies and means than such as belong to Christianity; and consequently we see in Christianity a principle of perfect unity and catholicity. The one principle of its divinity stamps Christianity with catholicity. It rests in God; it enunciates his will, his grace, his law, his salvation. If considered as an economy, God works in it, is its inspiring spirit, is its power and wisdom, is its fountain of blessing, is its head, is its source, is its causation of all privilege, is its great salvation. What, then, is Christianity, but God, the blessed Trinity, the Father everlasting, the Son of God, "the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person," the Holy Ghost the Comforter, "proceeding from the Father and the Son." Without God, Christianity, as an economy, would be like nature without the sun, dark, bleak, barren. With God, Christianity is all radiant, lovely, vital, fruitful. And as it partakes of his divinity, so it must move on his glorious attributes; and these attributes being like himself universal, so the religion of which he is the God and author must be catholic.

What of the everlasting Father? None will deny that creation is his work, that he is the cause of all causes, the life of all lives, the wisdom of all wisdom, the fountain of all goodness as displayed in the ten thousand currents of creation, the infinitely prolific original of all the forms of beauty in the universe; and that he in some sort calls forth the music, the glory, the holiness, the love as well as the power of his own essence in the ten thousand harmonies, movements, and splendours of nature. Does he live universally in the universe? Does he act? Does he bless? Is he a Catholic God? Hear the Psalmist, who says: "Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high; I cannot attain unto it. Whither shall I go from thy spirit, or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there; if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me." But then this is said of nature, and of man simply as a

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creature. Is God omnipresent in religion? Is his spiritual kingdom Catholic? It is. The very unity of God makes this necessary; his moral cannot be separated from his natural perfections. But his natural perfections are infinite, are omnipresent,—that is, are universal; the same must be the case with his moral perfections. Hence, as Christianity emanates from, and gives expression to these perfections, it follows that Christianity must be universal—be, in fact, the moral system of the universe. Catholicity, then, like space, is the corollary of God; it is the idea of all belonging to his Godhead; it is the broad light beaming from all his attributes; it is, so to speak, the day resting on the mountain, penetrating all the vallies, embracing all creatures, and inspiring with life and joy all the pious of God's rational family. Let us imagine a man, possessed with a Christian idea of God, to be imbued with true faith, to have long experienced all the happiness of communion with the Father of spirits through Jesus Christ, to have been engaged in the delightful services of God's house, and to have received in innumerable instances the answer of his prayers; let us suppose all this, and let us imagine this blessed Christian to remove to other regions, to indefinite distances, to worlds unknown. What would follow? Would his Christian idea of God answer to his new position? Would his adoption, his devotion, his love, his trust, be in harmony with his condition and his relations? We need not argue the question as regards this world; we see the principle demonstrated. The Englishman at our antipodes, or in any other part of the world where he wanders—and he wanders everywhere, where the sun can guide him, the ocean carry him, the earth bear him,—he finds the same home-born faith which he possessed and exercised in his fatherland, and everywhere and equally efficacious, on the stormy sea, in the American forests, among slaves and freemen, in the West Indies, by the side of the Ganges or the Indus, in China, surrounded by millions who know not God, in Australia, and Polynesia, in Africa groaning beneath the woes and wrongs of ages, in Turkey, Greece, Egypt, anywhere, everywhere, the British believer in God finds that his faith answers to his necessities, his privileges, his soul's health and happiness. What is this? The person has altered his position; he has made the circuit of the globe: he is singing, praying, adoring in regions far remote from those he has left behind; he looks upon other skies; he treads another soil; he listens to other languages; he roams over other mountains; he pours forth his joys and sorrows to other winds; he looks upward to God from other solitudes. Does he meet God here? Does his old faith answer? Does he find the same grace and love? Is his soul still happy in God's communion? Is the altar he erects on the sands of a distant shore, or in the city of strange faces and strange jargons, the same as that altar on the hearth of his home, where his father was the patriarchal priest, and blessings from heaven descended upon his household? Yes, everything is the same. But upon what principle can religion be the same in all places? Clearly on the principle that God is the universal, the Catholic God. But is this privilege equally enjoyed by others? Let us examine it. Whatever else our age may be, it has proved itself an evangelizing age. Its missions are its glory. Those missions have sought and found the wandering sheep of many wildernesses, have brought them to Christ and to God, have opened to them the scriptures, have tamed their savage nature, and produced Christian brotherhood, have put songs of praise into their lips, and have planted among them the arts of social life. Is this faith like ours? Do they enjoy the same love? Are they possessed of the same hope? Have the same graces a place in their hearts? Yes, there is a perfect identity in all these particulars. Then the religion must be the same. If the Hindoo, the New Zealander, the Fejee, the Hottentot, the Caffre, the Negro, the red Indian—if all these could be assembled in this or any other place, to constitute a new pentecost with the lively French believer, the metaphysical German, the poor Hungarian, the Greek, the Copt, the Syriac, all would make the same confession of sin, pray in the same style of fervour and faith, press to the same cross of the Saviour, and acknowledge the same God and Father; the same Bible would be embraced by all, the same hymns sung by all, the same Litany would be responded to by all, the same bread would be broken by all,

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and the same cup drunk, in token of a common faith and a common brotherhood. How is this? Let the apostle answer. He says: "He is the God and Father of all, who is above all, and in all, and through all," filling all believers with the same plenitude of grace, and inspiring them with the same law. But the Son of God, our glorious Saviour, is the head of the Christian system, the Prophet, Priest, and King of our dispensation. Is he a Catholic Saviour? Is his kingdom a Catholic kingdom? Let us briefly answer these questions. True, the personal presence of Christ is no longer on earth, no longer in the church below; yet it is perfectly easy to see that all the benefits of his presence and mediatorial government may be fully enjoyed. That which is not present in corporeal and tangible reality may be enjoyed in the distant realms of the universe. The central power of any system, whether human or divine, may in its influence and blessings be diffused to an indefinite extent. We may instance a human monarch whose reign is absolute: his personal qualities give the predominant spirit to his authority. He is just, and his justice is felt through the whole extent of his dominion; he is wise, and his wisdom guides his counsels, and is enjoyed in its effects by all his subjects; he is benevolent, bountiful, and good, and his goodness flows in every channel to the extent of his authority; he is a religious prince, and his religious spirit, his fear and love of God, is known in the purity of his administration and the promotion of the morality, the good order, and peace of the community, and in the provision made for religious services and the glory of God. In all these cases this monarch is not personally present in every part of his dominion, and yet the effect of his personal character is manifest in every corner of his territory, and is felt by every individual of his empire. We take an illustration from nature. The sun, the fountain of light, warmth, and life to the world, is not present through the mighty spaces of the solar system, and yet he is present in his benign influences. Whatever may be the nature of this central power and force, that central power and force is removed by a prodigious influence from the abodes of the earth, and yet is felt and enjoyed universally. Daylight dawns, dispersing the gloomy shadows of night; warmth follows in its train, rousing, awakening, inspiring every living creature with a sensation of happiness; genial, vernal, and summer influences descend from his throne of glory, and ten thousand forms of life respond to his call; forests bloom in rich and variegated foliage; corn fields present their waving beauties to the breeze; meadows, mountains, rivers, gardens, all put on their dress and stand forth, as on a gala day, to present their homage of allegiance and their offering of joy to their king. All living creatures participate in the general gladness; the melody of the songsters of the woods, the notes of the browsing cattle, the frolics of young life in its vast varieties, the soft and gentle whispers of the summer breeze, all conspire in one universal concert and chorus; and the whole as the fruit of one great central power, though existing at a distance,—the sun in his glory.

That remarkable book, the Revelation of Jesus Christ, is in truth a revelation of his personal glories; of his Godhead; of his active agency, and his omnipresent power; of his Sovereign reign in the church and in the nations of the earth; of his war against antichrist, and the final issues of his living dominion, influence, and authority, on earth and in heaven: and moreover, of his connection with all things, the past, the present, and the future; with all that is good, as its author and safeguard, with all that is bad as its judge and avenger; with the cause of truth as its shield, with the cause of error as its destroyer by the word of his mouth; with the realms of earth as the head of the dispensation under which it is placed; with the realms of darkness as casting Satan into the gulf of eternal fire, and with the realms of light and glory as the centre and substance of their bliss. It is then seen that Christ is Lord of all. The elementary development of his mission is seen to be on earth, but the full and complete consummation is in heaven. This world is thus made the ground-plot of the kingdom of Christ—that is, the receptacle of all its truths. The region of time and life is the normal state of the Christian religion; and the region of eternity is its perfected condition. The church below is made the instrument of a practical redemption constantly going on; the church above receives to its

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embraces and its rewards all who are thus redeemed. The gospel is an educational instrument, whether considered in its written records, or its ministry, services, and sacrifices. The souls which receive its impress in due time are translated to the region of vision, of sensible glory, and of perfected intuitive knowledge. The kingdom of Christ on earth is working out spiritual results on a gigantic scale on the souls of men; the kingdom of glory receives them all to itself, and places man in his own order: thus the two kingdoms or economies are one, and there is one all present, all presiding Lord. Christ is all and in all: he has united God and man in his own person; he has redeemed the world by the shedding of his blood; he has planted on earth his glorious kingdom which provides for the salvation of all, and actually judges all; he has placed himself at the head of a great moral system which not only embraces and enforces moral truth, but causes this moral truth to touch every soul and every interest; he has taken possession of the grave itself, and established his dominion of life in the regions of death; he has spanned the mighty distance betwixt earth and heaven, planted one foot on the world and the other on the mysterious shores of eternity; he has caused angels to become ministering spirits to man, and made man a citizen of the heavenly Jerusalem; he has caused heavenly influences, agencies, and blessings to descend upon earth in rich fulness, and he has filled the courts above with the melodies and hallelujahs of redeemed souls. Is not the Lord Jesus Christ, then, a universal, a catholic Saviour?

I must omit a very philosophical, as you may be sure, and a very eloquent and forcible passage, from Hooker, on this question of our Lord's dominion, and our Lord's presence. Hooker argues very forcibly and very eloquently that our blessed Lord and Saviour Christ, by the conjunction of his human nature with the divine, is present in the benefits of that human nature everywhere in the world. I wish I had the opportunity of reading it, for I am quite sure it would be the very best passage in the lecture, but, Oh! time, time! I cannot keep pace with it! I am always left behind-hand by it, and so I shall be to the end.

We can only make one brief remark on the catholic work of the Holy Spirit, the third person of the glorious Trinity. In considering Christianity as an experimental and practical system, we naturally inquire what may be considered its executive power. The apostolic and inspired evangelists answer this question—that there is one Spirit, the Spirit of God, and that, being God, he represents the infinitude of the divine nature, the plenitude of Jehovah's grace and love, and all the powers of his administration; that he is the substitute of the personal Christ, co-operating in all the purposes of his redemption, moving in concert with his atoning merit and priestly power, testifying of him, and carrying to the hearts of all believers the blessings of his death; that he fills the true church with his presence as in ancient times, rendering the word preached and the sacraments and services of the church vital, and pouring forth streams of living water in the sanctuaries of religion; that he lives, so to speak, in the written word of God to the full extent, eliminating its truths, vitalizing its doctrines, applying its promises, giving power and force to its precepts, and throwing his light on its revelation of the future; that the universal provisions of peace, triumph, and victory promised to the Christian cause, embraced and made known by the prophecies, lying as they do amongst all nations, stretching through all time, affecting all interests, and issuing in the millennial glory, are all within the scope of the Spirit's work, and to be practically accomplished by his living agency; and that the error of infidelity, of superstition and idolatry, the false systems of worship and of worldly policy, confederations and social evils which cannot bear the brightness of his illumination, the breezes of his life-giving influences, and the sanctifying impressions of his grace—all these must wither and give place to the kingdom of God upon earth. This is another element of the catholicity of the gospel. The Holy Ghost is ubiquitous not only as to space, but as to time, heaven, earth, the world. This holy influence is the basis of all good in the world; all the fruits of wisdom, piety, holiness, love, grow from this soil. We may say that, just as the atmosphere

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is universal, and answers to everything in physical nature, so the Holy Spirit answers to everything in the moral world. What do we see? We see the atmosphere embracing the earth as a soul bearing the beams of the sun in tempered light through all the valleys and over all the mountains of the world, touching everything, whether animal, plant, or man, with the impulses of life; bearing, in gentle dew or floating clouds, the rains which give refreshment to wearied, parched, and drooping nature; and though not seen and not heard, except in the gale or in the storm, penetrates everywhere, and is connected with the life of everything existing. Something like this, only much more sublime, is the case with the Spirit of God. While the Father is the performer of all acts of grace, and to the Son is attributed the work of redemption, yet still the Spirit is connected with the whole. There can be nothing moral in the universe, —nothing true, holy, good,—nothing happy and joyous amongst men but the Spirit must be the active agent of it all. Then we may ask, is not a Spirit who possesses all the attributes of divinity, who pervades all space, and fills all things, who lives in all time, and is connected with all events, who animates and gives vitality to a divine and universal religion, and who is effecting and bringing about the counsels of God in filling the world, and indeed the universe, with the glories of his truth and grace—we say, is not this a catholic Spirit? and is not the religion in which he lives a catholic religion?

I do not know whether this has been expressed in a very intelligible way to you. In looking for a universal religion, it strikes me that we must necessarily look to God; that he alone can be the foundation and the basis of catholicity, properly understood; and that all believers, whoever they may be, to whatever party they may be attached, if they have access to the Father through the Son and by the Holy Ghost—that these parties are building their faith and hope and peace and purity and happiness upon a catholic basis. The idea is something like this—and perhaps I should have shown it better in the whole scope of the lecture if I could have read it all—that our religious faith, life, holiness, and love, would meet in God on any shore, in any place in the world—the moon, the sun, the stars, anywhere,—answering to the relation in which we are placed. As God is the universal God of all true believers, so he would be enjoyed by them in any place. That is the notion I have been trying to work out; and moreover that the God of our Christianity is a Trinity—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; that the Father is represented as performing certain gracious acts in the matter of our salvation; that the Son is represented as being incarnated in our nature, and, after dying for us, as reigning over our race, and standing in the relationship of a Brother and a Redeemer. These are the ideas I wish to bring before your attention. I do not look upon our Christianity as anything short of God. Church organizations and professions, and all that, are very good in their place; but we must look deeper; we must pass into the Bible if we are to find our Christianity, and become, properly speaking, catholic Christians.

I wish in as brief space as I can to take up another proposition: it is that the divine revelation, the Bible alone, can be the exponent of a divine catholicity, and consequently is alone entitled to be considered as the embodiment of catholic truth. We cannot enter into the controversy of either ancient or recent times on the question of catholic truth further than to

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remark that any merely human summary of doctrines, any theological system emanating from the mind of man, any proposition, however logically put, any formularies agreed upon by councils of men, any decrees or articles of religion, any church polity, any hymns and spiritual songs, inspired by the poetic enthusiasm of good men—we say, inasmuch as all these things necessarily partake of the limitations of the human mind, they cannot be catholic in the true and logical sense of the expression. The whole truth of God cannot by any skill or contrivance be put into a syllogism. To what then does this lead? It leads to the inquiry as to whether we have anything higher than these modes of instruction. We answer, that we possess the inspired book, the blessed Bible; and as this inspired book is emphatically the word of God, we are bound to consider it alone as the true exponent of catholic truth. That the Bible is a full and complete revelation of saving truth to all who receive it, will be conceded by all who admit its divinity. No one can possibly go beyond its teaching. It possesses the unquestionable quality of being the ultimate truth on all the questions of which it treats; and as it treats of everything in religion, it necessarily possesses this characteristic of universality. What do we want to know of anything connected with our salvation in which we are left in the dark by this divine and infallible guide! You may remember—some of you, at any rate—that a few years ago there was a great deal of controversy on the question of catholic truth, and we were all put to read the fathers in order to learn what catholic truth was. Now I wonder whether it is easier to comprehend the Bible or to comprehend these fathers. At any rate we have one advantage in the Bible—it speaks the same language always; but the fathers speak all sorts of languages, and differ from each other on every religious topic. Are we then to be put to reconcile these contradictions? I think God has graciously manifested his great, his exuberant and universal love to man in making the Bible, the simple Bible, as Chillingworth used to say, and only the Bible, as the religion of Protestants, the necessary object of study and of faith.

The dispensation of the gospel meets man in all his wants. Its divinity is seen in its fecundity of blessings. In it the mind is invited to walk in the path of light, reaching to the lowest depths of nature, stretching through the eternal, and reaching even to the throne of God, throwing its bright visions on all intermediate spaces and objects betwixt the lowest and the highest, presenting to the mind a perfection of truth in all the subjects which can interest man, instructing, illuminating, irradiating, guiding in the paths of purity and of peace, as in an orbit of life. It teaches the legal and spiritual condition of the soul before God; it assures a pardon full and complete for the past, and grace, and help, and comfort for the time to come. It deals with the sentiment of happiness, giving all such blessings as tend to ensure it, and founding it on solid realities. It gives the emotions scope, and freedom, and development; it attaches to the moral sensibilities motives and principles; and bestows the power of good volitions, a pleasure in the performance of good actions. It places before us the torch of hope, the prospect and the certainty of future happiness and felicity; it secures to us all the blessings of redeeming love here, and the hallowed blessings of heaven hereafter. All this is of God; it is the result of a religion which reaches to the

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whole spiritual life, however placed as to time, circumstances, and wants. There is not any condition of the mind in which the word of God is not found to provide a blessing suited to its state. There is something peculiar, indeed, even in this; it is not found in any human writing. The Christian cannot perceive depth enough, height enough, breadth enough, in the thoughts and teachings of man to meet his aspirations, his hopes, his fears, his joys, and love. He seeks an illimitable space in which to move; and he finds this space in the blessed Bible. He wants a teaching which, while it gives light, will do it universally, but delicately and gently; and he finds this in the word of God. He sees that in his position he needs truth, which while it touches all the strings of nature, all his moral sensibilities, will save him from minute, formal, logical processes, and enable him to think and move in an infinite region; and he finds this in the scriptures. Yes, the Bible is more than an oracle; it gives more than light: it is as the principle of life in our physical nature; it invigorates as it touches; it imparts power as it imparts its blessings. God is not merely on his throne, or in the heavens: he is in his word; he pervades it; he breathes life into it; he is beneath, above, and around; he holds its truths in his own hand, and fulfils them all; he gives it the impress of his own glory, and is seen in it as in a glass. In fine he gives to all its doctrines a reality, certain and infallible, by his power; to all its promises certainty, by his pledged readiness to fulfil them; to all its prophecies the absolute prospective of accomplishment, by his own prescient agency; to all moral requirements a possible obedience, by the strength of his own living law.

But the Scriptures are a catholic emanation from God in another sense—namely, that they contain the elements of all moral truth as applicable to man's relations, his social duties, and his well being in the world. (Let me say to my young friends, that the point at which all this aims, is the recommendation of the word of God, to be held sacred by you as the true guide of your life.) The Christian principle on this point seems to be plainly this: that there exists a living, sovereign, omnipresent, moral government of God; that this embraces all interests, all destinies; that it is conservative of good, and antagonistic of evil; that it is both general and minute;—general, inasmuch as it comprehends the entire range of nations, the social state, the whole concerns of human life; and minute, inasmuch as it embraces individual interests, and the preservation and punishment of every person. We do not stop to reason out this proposition, but remark on the historical fact, that evil things invariably meet with destructive opposition which, sooner or later, inevitably ends in their decay and ruin; whilst that which is true and good continues, though opposed by great forces from without. The fate of all the great nations of antiquity illustrates one of these conditions; and the life and prosperity of the Christian church in its pristine beauty, the other. What overthrew the great and mighty empires of ancient times? They possessed territory, climate, bright suns, great populations, numerous and magnificent cities, trade and commerce, science and arts, government and laws, numerous and well disciplined armies, and, in fact, all which combines to render states massive and strong; and yet they have all fallen. How is this? Evidently that because in their progress they were brought into col-

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lision with the moral laws of the universe ; and, either by the gradual process of decay, or by some violent shocks, they have fallen from their greatness and lie as vessels stranded on the shores of time. In the early age of the Christian church, we see an institution rise from small beginnings, with no human patronage, no estates and property, no great names connected with its society, no state authority, or legal *prestige* ; and yet it continues to live to grow, to prosper, to extend its wide dominion, and successfully to prosecute its great career in the midst of constant opposition. How is this accounted for ? Upon the principle that Christianity in its pure state was a divine institution, and that its operations in society were in agreement with the universal laws of the moral world. Now this question of the moral and social state is a grave consideration to all, and especially to young men ; in fact, nothing so intensely engages the attention of the age as this question. In all theories of the social state moral questions are necessarily blended, and we find that these questions form a very important element in all the schemes of social reform and happiness now being sought, especially on the continent of Europe. It would be unjust to say that the communists repudiate moral considerations from their projects ; but there is one vicious principle in all their doctrines—namely, the erection of an independent human standard of moral right and wrong ; the thoughts, judgment, affections, tendencies, and conscience of human nature as it is found in the masses being made the basis of the social system. It will be seen that we oppose to this the idea of a moral system resting in God, having man in all the complicated conditions of his life as the object of its administration, touching his soul and all the affairs of his life, but still in itself independent of him, above him, and demanding from him his fealty, his trust, and his obedience.

Now the question before us is as to whether the Holy Scriptures are a true revelation of the nature and requirements of this moral government of God ; in other words, would a man, a young man for instance, always be right in his social affections, relations and duties, in giving himself up fully to the guidance of the word of God ? Would a man find himself in harmony with the predominating moral laws by which all things are governed, if he were in all things governed by the Bible ? Or would he find that in following the Bible he got into collision with some impalpable but irresistible forces existing to impede his progress and disappoint his hopes ? Supposing this person rightly understanding the teaching of the word of God, to walk altogether on this line, to choose this for his pattern, to discard as wrong every principle, allusion and doctrine opposed to his cherished guide, would he find that the scriptural road would conduct him into some social night, some vast bog, some boundless wilderness ? Or would he find himself constantly making progress in the right direction ? We can have no hesitation in giving the answer, In all possible conditions of life the Bible opens up to a man a right direction, places him in harmony with all the truths and principles of God's moral government, enables him to move concurrently with the wisdom, the equity, the purity, the goodness which, with an immutability more durable than the mountains of granite, rule in living power over all earthly things. There may be mistakes, and the mind may misapprehend the teaching and the meaning of scripture ; but a young man on leaving the home of his affection, if he place himself humbly, believably, on the word of God, in seeking his social position, as we call it, his fortune in the world, will be guided in a safe, happy and useful path ;—the object being to understand what the will of the Lord

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is, to act in conformity with the established order of his providence and the spiritual glories of his kingdom,—will find his right position, and in this will be his success. The principal question for such persons is not how life, and especially youth, may be most gaily spent, but how it may be placed in agreement with the ordination of God, his truth, his administration, his greatness; and nothing but the Bible can open to us all these great relations, show us our place in the midst of all other creatures, teach what to avoid and what to choose, mark out for us our standing ground, and tell us how to proceed in building the fabric of our moral and social happiness, throw its light on all passing events, and teach us how to improve them, and to give to all things their relative importance—to the little their littleness, to the great their greatness, to the worldly their worldliness, to the heavenly their heaviness, to the body its meanness, to the soul its dignity, to this life its brevity, to the next its eternity; to intelligence and good conscience, honour, and religion, their unspeakable value as more to be prized than rubies; and to ignorance, baseness, depravity, as things, however gilded, placing us in antagonism against all the laws, agencies, and influences of his providence, and equally against our own happiness and prosperity. The Bible throws its sure light upon all things. It never deceives. It does not, like other teachings, stop short; but by its truth indicates all our relations, and by its grace consecrates them.

Well, I must draw to a close. I have not half done, but it is ten o'clock, and I prefer leaving off in the midst of what is interesting to myself rather than run the hazard of finishing to an empty place. I have prepared a great many topics that are interesting to my own mind, but I trust our young friends will see the drift of the whole lecture. The drift is to place God, Christ, the Holy Spirit before you as necessary to catholicity,—that he is universal, that he is your God and Father, that you must strive to live in union with him; and towards the close of the lecture I have some material bearing upon the catholic spirit. The catholic spirit is a very necessary thing for all of us to cultivate, but especially important to young men. It does not matter much what sort of a spirit *we* are of—such as I am—not so very much, I mean; but it is of very great consequence for you to be right. I am impressed with this, that the finest, the most striking homage that was ever paid to the catholic spirit in a catholic Christian was, if I understand the matter aright, rendered to a gentleman a month or two ago in this place, and I presume upon this spot. Dr. Duff is, I should imagine, just about one of the most catholic Christians in the world, but he possesses a catholic spirit in connection with splendid genius, with soundness of mind, with truly evangelical and noble sentiments, and all adorned by the labours of a pure, a zealous, and a glorious evangelical life. Sir, there are men in the world who overshadow other men; there are men to whom the world is obliged to pay its homage; and when Dr. Duff was in our metropolis, at the May meetings, you were all obliged to pay homage to his genius, his labours, his Christianity, and especially his glorious catholicity; and, to my inexpressible delight, the venerable archbishop, bishops, and clergy of our church, (of which I always wish to speak with great respect, and more than respect—with great affection,) the hierarchy of England was obliged to break through its trammels, open its doors, admit Dr. Duff to this platform, and do homage to his catholic spirit. I think I never heard—I did not see it—I never heard of anything more impressive, more beautiful than this; and if we wish, sir,

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in our small degree, in our limited sphere, to make impressions of this sort, let us cultivate the Spirit of our Divine Master and Lord, and try to promote the gospel in the spirit of the gospel. We want a catholic spirit; we want the removal of littleness, sectarianism, isolation, individualism, and everything which keeps us apart from one another as Christians and as Christian churches. That is what we want; and I know, sir, of no spirit which can at all produce this but the Spirit of our Lord and Master—the spirit of love, of purity, of catholicity. I, for my own part, have made up my mind very long ago to agree with everybody who is with Christ. As to other matters—namely, our church, and ecclesiastical systems, and so forth, I say nothing about them; they are all right; and if not actually so, they are all right to those who believe them to be so and act upon them. I say an Independent is right, a Presbyterian is right, a Methodist is right, an Episcopalian is right; and these several denominational theories are only instruments by which to work. You don't mean to say my methodism is my religion—I mean my adherence to a visible external system. It is the instrument by which I work, and disseminate the religion I own. So of all other external developments of Christian life. The best church system is that which does most good. Well, and if we could only get more of the heart, the soul, the life, the love of Christianity, all the rest would get right in time. Let us, therefore, individually, as far as in us lies, endeavour and strive to cultivate and extend a truly catholic spirit.

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The following Nos. of the Penny Pulpit contain Sermons delivered at Exeter Hall.

- 1,700, The Great Exhibition, by the Rev. T. Binney.
- 1,701, The Gift of God, by the Hon. and Rev. B. W. Noel, M.A.
- 1,705, The Prodigal's Return, by the Rev. W. Brock.
- 1,706, The City of Refuge, by the Rev. J. Beaumont, M.D.
- 1,710, The Truth, by the Rev. J. Aldis.
- 1,711, Wisdom's Invitation, by the Rev. G. Smith.
- 1,713, Looking to Christ, by the Rev. J. Hamilton, D.D.
- 1,714, Why will ye die? by the Rev. J. Stoughton.
- 1,717, The Gospel, by the Rev. Luke Tyerman.
- 1,718, The Testimonies of God, by the Rev. T. Archer, D.D.
- 1,720—21, The Book for all Nations, and all Times, by the Rev. J. C. Miller.
- 1,724, Salvation, by the Rev. G. Clayton.
- 1,725, The difficulties of speculative Inquiry, by the Rev. J. H. Hinton, A.M.
- 1,728, The Final Judgment, by the Rev. John Burnet.
- 1,729, The Desire of all Nations, by the Rev. H. Cooke, D.D.
- 1,733, Witnessing to the Truth, by the Rev. C. Stovel.
- 1,738, Things Temporal, by the Rev. S. Martin.

(To be continued.)

THE SAVIOUR KNOCKING AT THE DOOR.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JULY 6, 1851,

BY THE REV. JAMES HAMILTON, D.D.

AT EXETER HALL.

"Behold I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me."—Revelations iii. 20.

In reading history or works of romance, you must have met many instances of remarkable visits. A family was in great distress, in deep poverty, when a stranger came to the door, and after a brief sojourn, left enough to make them suddenly and abundantly rich. Or stormy weather, or some chance of flood or field directed to a dwelling some accomplished or delightful visitor, and commenced a friendship which made the anniversary of his arrival an event in family history. But the like has never been your luck. In moments of exigency no benighted prince nor monarch in disguise has sought the shelter of your roof, and left you with lightened heart and laden purse; nor has it been your happiness to receive as abiding guests those rare spirits who lend existence new charms, and from materials the most common and familiar, bring elements of unsuspected beauty and unwonted delight.

And yet, my friends, I cannot help announcing that your luck is greater than you think, and that you too may yet be able to record a memorable visit, and recognize an illustrious visitor. It is true that he does not come to you in corporeal guise, nor appeal to your mortal sense. That time is past. There was a time when he went about among the homes of men. There was a time when his meek and holy presence was as familiar in Palestine as that of more ordinary prophets and teachers had been. There was a time when he put himself in people's way, and was ready to turn aside and tarry wherever he was an invited guest. From some doors he was repelled. Through whole villages would he pass and find refusals pouring on his weary steps from every jealous door-way and every hostile visage. And others patronised him, and paraded their hospitality in entertaining him; Pharisees and liberal-minded Sadducees, who respected his motives and honoured his goodness, though they little suspected his divine commission and Messianic claim. And others more or less dimly saw the prophetic tokens on his person which marked him out the Wonderful, the Prince of Peace, and hearing the voice from heaven, hailed him in reverence and love as God's Beloved Son—and feeling their guilt and misery to be such as needed a Divine Physician, welcomed him in humility and hope—and with

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affections going out to that adorable goodness which they saw and surmised, put their homes at his disposal, and their hearts in his hand. And to those who thus received him, and by doing it showed that they believed on his name, to them gave he power to become the sons of God. To their thankful ear he spoke it—"Be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven"—and in proportion as they despaired his glory, in their habitations he lit up the peace and sanctity of heaven.

But in this corporeal guise the Son of God perambulates our earth no more. Over his visible person these skies have for the present closed ; and though in other regions his person is as palpable as it is productive of assurance and joy, these regions are not here below. It is only in his ubiquitous Godhead that he still is here, and in his ever-living gospel that he now speaks to man. But in that Godhead he fills this place, and in that gospel he has often, brethren, spoken to you, and this day he speaks again, and this day his message is—"Behold, I stand at the door and knock : if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." After that you can never sigh and say that others are more favoured than you ; for if they can quote the day when some famous man was under their roof, or a prince sat at their table, you may tell of a day more wonderful. You may record that this day the Saviour himself knocked at your door. O ! that you may also be able to add,—And this day I opened the door, and the Son of God came in, and I supped with him, and he with me.

I. Who stands and knocks ?

II. What hinders that you should admit him ?

III. What would be the consequence if you opened the door and let him in ?

I. Who knocks ?

The Son of God. Before he was seen in Bethlehem's manger or Joseph's humble cottage, the highest heaven was his dwelling. To us there is nothing so strange as what is singularly bright, or holy, or sublime—but with Jesus it was all the other way. It was not strange to him to look forth on the dazzling glories of the upper paradise, and find flaming ministers and seraph messengers ready to fly over immensity and fulfil his commands ; but it was strange to him to find cold looks and averted faces and reluctant compliance on every side. It was not strange to him to find his home in the Father's bosom, for there he had found it from all eternity ; but it was strange to see the fox stealing home to his lair, and the bird bending her wing to her evening nest, and to think that He—their Maker—had this night nowhere to lay his head. It was not strange to him to gaze on sinless multitudes who paced the sea of glass and clustered on the hills of immortality, and made intensest glory wherever their radiant vesture floated ; but it was strange to see nothing passing by or drawing near save masses of pollution and shapes of sin. And it was not strange to hear, ascending to himself, the anthem in all variety of cadence, from the ecstatic whisper of the new-come denizen, to the thunderous swell of symphonious seraphim, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come ;" but, oh ! it was very strange to hear the hooting and yelling throng, and every voice the same, "Crucify him, crucify him !" But that strange episode is over. The mystery of godliness is so far completed, and God manifest in flesh has been received up into glory again. Jesus has once more been declared the Son of God with power, and gone back to his familiar abode, his Father's bosom, and his royal seat, all

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authority is given him in heaven and in earth, and whilst there is entreaty in his attitude there is majesty in his tone ; for whilst he stands at the door and knocks, he adds, "To him that overcometh, will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne."

But lest you should be awed and alarmed by the approach of a personage so glorious and divine, let me add, The friend of sinners knocks. Dear brethren, I know that this is not the idea which some of you entertain regarding the adorable Immanuel. To your guilty consciences he rather appears a phantom or a foe ; and when you are told of the Saviour's kindness and the Saviour's love, you lend a suspicious or incredulous ear. What mean ye to doubt his pity, and deny his grace ? Will you gainsay the faithful and true witness ? Will ye cavil at his kindest invitations, and contradict his dying cry ? Was not he sincere, when he said, "Come unto me ?" and was there no earnestness in that last petition, "Father, forgive them ?" Can you see him in mortal agony, and sweating great drops of blood, and still question his compassion ? or can you look on that quivering cross and remember what it was which nailed him there, and still refuse that Jesus is the friend of sinners ? O Saviour, why weepest thou ? What means that tear in thy sinless eye ? "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee ; how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, but ye would not." "O sinner, sinner," as one has expressed it, "thou that killedst the Saviour and scornest the salvation which is sent to thee ; how often would I have pressed thee to my bosom, and rejoiced over thy repentant spirit ! How often have I stood at thy door and knocked ; and how often would I have come in and made you happy, but you would not. I weep not for myself. All things are mine ; from the centre of the eternal throne to the farthest verge of immensity, and from the zenith of Deity to the least act of Omnipotence, all is mine, boundless, endless bliss. But I weep, because sinners will throw their souls into hell. I weep, because they will perish rather than repent ; because they will forfeit eternal glory rather than renounce the world and its follies. I weep, rather than admit my love and grace ; they will take up their abode with everlasting burnings. When I call they will not hearken ; when I stretch out my hands they will not regard : when I knock they will not open."

He who knocks is Immanuel, the Mediator betwixt God and man, the Prince of Peace, the Lord of glory, the Redeemer of the lost, Almighty to save, and all-sufficient to satisfy your souls, the Being with the strongest arm and most loving heart in all the universe ; and wherefore is it that you keep this glorious and gracious visitant standing without ? What hinders that you should not let him in ?

II. Different hearts are bolted with different bars. Some are closed by carelessness, and some by ignorance, and some by indolence, and some by frivolity, and some by prejudice, and some by pride, and some by strong besetting sins.

1. Some hearts are closed by carelessness. Perhaps when you have lain down at night, or been engaged in a distant part of the dwelling, you may have heard a knock, but it was indistinct, and you said to yourself, "That is not meant for me ; it must be my neighbour's door, for I am expecting nobody just now." Well, this is the case with some of you. You hear a

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sermon, but you hear it as though you heard it not. When you go home you think no more about it, and even at the time when it is chiming in your ears, you do not feel as if it were intended for you. "It's a knock at my neighbour's door." Now, my dear hearers, if you have lost the good of every former sermon from this delusion, listen now. I must not name your names but it is to you, the people who come here and fill these seats—not to the people in some other place that I am speaking now; and it is not at the door of some heathen hut or abject hovel, but at the door of your heart, O my hearer, that the Saviour is standing now. And you must not be careless any more. Whether you be a little child or a sturdy man, I pray you listen; for you do not know if you will ever hear another sermon; you do not know if God's Spirit will strive with you any more. You cannot tell,—I cannot tell, but wearied out, a patient Saviour may pass away, and never try to rouse you up again.

2. And some hearts are shut against the blessed Jesus by the bolt of ignorance. They do not understand the gospel. Are you sure that you understand it? How do you expect to get to heaven? If a neighbour, or your own child were coming and asking you, What must I do to be saved? Do you think you could tell him distinctly?

3. But some who understand the gospel have their hearts shut against the Saviour by indolence. Perhaps you have read a book or heard a sermon which almost persuaded you to be a Christian. You saw that the true way to be happy for time and eternity, was to give yourself up to the Saviour. For the moment you were quite convinced. But things came in the way. You were just at that time particularly busy, and you said to yourself that as soon as you had this hurry over—this engagement or this pursuit—you would give yourself wholly to the one thing needful. But when that interruption was ended, you were no longer anxious or earnest. You had heard the summons of the King of Glory, and you made some movement to open the door—but you found that the bolt had so long been fastened, it had rusted in the socket; and after a feeble effort to force it back, you resolved to await a more convenient season. Alas! for that delay! The bolt is still fixed and firm, and the rust of sloth and remissness has only gnawed the deeper in. There was a freshness in your spirit then, which is not in it now, and you are almost ready to despair, and say as the old man exclaimed, in the bitterness of his soul, "Mind religion while you are young. I, too, might once have been saved; but now my heart is hard and brawny."

4. And some are hindered from letting in the Saviour by frivolity. You would think that person insane who, if some distinguished personage were at the door, should leap up to open it—but whilst hastening down the stairs, if his eye alighted on a bird or flower, should stop to amuse himself with it, and at once forget his errand. But what wiser were you that time when you rose from some impressive ordinance, or left the sanctuary so solemnized! when you saw time's littleness, and the soul's costliness so clearly, and felt the powers of the coming world so vividly—when you were saying to yourself, "Now I shall halt no longer—for me henceforward to live is Christ. From this day forward I begin a holier and more heavenly life"—but walking home with some carnal acquaintance, or at table, meeting with flippant or foolish companions, you allowed all your sacred impressions to subside, and all your good resolutions to be spirited away? And what wiser will you be if after what you now have heard, and after what you have been this moment

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thinking, you go your way—not to yield yourself to God—not to ask his Holy Spirit—not to open the door to Jesus—but stop short to trifl with some worldly friend, or spend the precious moments in idle talk? I know very well that seriousness is not sanctity, any more than gloom is godliness; but I also know that the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and that it needs all diligence to make salvation sure. And if you are really in earnest about your souls—if you are fleeing from the wrath to come, and intent on eternal life—if the Spirit of God has effectually roused you from the apathy and indolence of your natural condition, seriousness is not a thing you will need to assume. You cannot help it. The great realities which possess your spirit will make you men in earnest. You will have no desire for vanity, and no patience for foolish talking. Like a man on his way to the physician—having just found out that he is labouring under a rapid and awful malady, you will have no inclination to turn aside and look at some diverting show. Or like a man whose house is burning, and who hears kind neighbours shouting at the door, you will start up, though some one offered even then to tell you a most amusing story.

5. And some doors are check-chained by prejudice. They open a little way, but it is only to be closed more hopelessly. They once had some liking to religion, but it was not the Saviour in the book,—the Christ in the Bible whom they loved. It was the gospel in the preacher, or Christianity in the Christian, for which they had a favour—and now that this liking is changed into coldness or aversion, their devotion is like the morning cloud—their piety like the early dew—it is all dissolved away.

6. And some hearts are barred by pride. Who knows but this again may be the case with some of you? What is it that the Saviour asks? Precisely this—that as a Saviour you would admit him instantly, and even as you are. But do you know there is a pride of poverty? Do you know that when the noble visitor knocks at the door of the naked or tawdry dwelling, there is a rush to put things to rights, and he is left to stand and knock again, till they have put the best face on the broken furniture? Ah, brethren! the Saviour knows us. He knows our pride of poverty. He knows how anxious we are to pass for “rich and increased with goods, and needing nothing”—and whilst we are trying to put the best appearance on all within, he is left standing at the door. Is this the case with none of you? Do you not feel that there is such disorder through all your souls at present—such a penury of right principle—such an absence of right feelings and right affections—such a chaos of broken-down resolutions and tattered endeavours—such a dust of earthly-mindedness, that if you are to receive a heavenly guest, you would like some time to put it all in readiness? But don’t you know it never will be better? and the only way to create order and comfort in this dismal den, is for the gates to lift up their head, and let the King of glory enter. The soul is always a cage of confusion, and a haunt of misery and sin, till in his pacific power and beatific wealth, the Saviour takes possession; and if the secret thought of any soul be, “I am not ready for the Saviour—I am not good enough to receive him,” draw the bolt and open the door, and see if a day of Christ’s presence will not effect more than an age of your own painstaking. Put aside your self-righteous pride, and be content to accept a Saviour, who of God is made unto you wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.

7. And many a door is barricaded by some strong besetting sin. There is

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the gain of some iniquity—the delightsomeness of some sensual indulgence—the inveteracy of some evil habit. From some hearts drunkenness has shut out the Saviour—from some covetousness has kept him out—from some Sabbath-trading, or the love of this present world. And knowing that Christ hath no fellowship with Beliel—knowing that he insists on the expulsion of these master-sins, many who really wish the salvation of their souls, still exclude that only Being who can save them, and rather than go to glory with the Son of God they will risk perdition with this favourite sin. There was an engaging young man, to whose door the King of glory came in the days of his flesh, and the young man was much inclined to give the Saviour place, and he parleyed through the embrasure beside the gate, but the strong bolt of worldliness was on the door, and finding that the Saviour would only come in if this besetting sin went out,—slowly and sadly he closed the loophole, and ended the parley, for he had great possessions. And Judas himself was once predisposed for the Saviour. He gave up a great deal, and liked to hover near him. Outwardly, at least, he followed him. But to his Divine control he could never open and surrender his heart, for the brazen bolt of greed and dishonesty had shut fast the door. And when Jesus knocked, Felix trembled, and was already on his feet to admit this Divine claimant into his soul, when a guilty passion stopped him, and made him sit down in guilt and security again. And is there nothing like this the case with any here? Is no one long since persuaded of the excellence of true religion, and the surpassing claims of the Saviour, but still hindered by some strong iniquity from giving him the supremacy in his affections, and the control of all his conduct? Do you not feel that if it were not for some bad companion, or for the fear of man, or for the pecuniary loss it might occasion,—if it were not for the criticism to which it might subject you, or the hardships which it might entail on you, or the familiar sin which it calls you to abandon, you could decide forthwith, and yield yourself to the power of piety this very day? Is not it sad, that with heaven waiting at the door, one single sin should prevail on you to keep it out, and continue living sinfully, wretchedly, and ungodly, like the rest of an evil world?

III. For were you to yield to the striving Spirit—were you to withdraw these bolts, and admit into your soul a mighty and merciful Redeemer, what would be the consequence? Pardon of sin would come. Peace of conscience would come. The smile of God would come into your soul. Where Christ enters, there enters with him a pledge of pardon; there enters with him a good conscience; there enters with him the earnest of glory. When the Saviour entered the house of Zaccheus, the surprised and thankful publican entertained him with the best that he had, and gave up to him the control of his conduct, and the sovereignty of his affections; and the Divine and compassionate Jesus announced, "this day is salvation come to this house." But if you cannot now receive him to your table you can do the equivalent, you can open to him your soul, you can give him the home-stead of your affections, and the control of your life: you can cast your soul upon him for salvation; and if you do this the Saviour will say to you as he said to Zaccheus, "This day is salvation come to this house," This day is salvation come to this soul. "To as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons God, even to them that believe on his name."

Admit the Saviour, and what else enters? Your better life. Immor-

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tality begun. Incipient heaven. Christ in the heart is glory in the bud ; for what is heaven but the presence of Christ constantly dwelling in the soul into which he comes. The believing soul that accepts and welcomes him, into that soul he comes—and in coming heaven comes with him. “ If any man hear my voice, I will come in to him, and sup with him, and he with me.”

And now, my dear friends, I have tried it once more. I have tried to set before you the Gospel's urgency and your own great business, of instantly and gladly believing. I have tried to tell you of that august but most amiable Stranger, who sues for admission at your door—how willingly he would come in and bless your souls with the joy of pardon and the wealth of a better world. I have asked you to believe the Bible report, and let in a Saviour whose presence is protection from the wrath to come, and whose supremacy is the subjugation of sin. I have striven to iterate his own kind challenge—“Behold, I stand at the door and knock ; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him.” Oh, do you hear his voice, and will you open ? Will none of you, moved by a Saviour's patience, and melted by his condescending pity—will none of you now exclaim, “Come in thou blessed of the Lord, wherefore standest thou without ?” Will none of you from this day forward, invite the Son of God to the highest throne in your adoring spirits, and the Friend of sinners to the warmest recess of your grateful and devoted hearts ? Do you not see the guilt of treating one so glorious with such contempt, and one so gracious with such unkindness ? This is not the first time that Immanuel has sought admission into your suspicious and sin-bolted soul. When you were a little child he gave a gentle knock, and then it was not at the door but the window that the Saviour stood—and as he stood at the casement and tapped so lightly there, like the touch of a rose-bud in some tender hand—and you looked up, and saw “the Lord your Shepherd,” “the gentle Jesus, meek and mild,” you saw a fairer, a truer sight, than perhaps you have ever since perceived—you saw the Saviour in his lovingness. But you fell asleep, and when you next awaked, everything was dark. You had grown up into a thoughtless boy, and that benignant look of Jesus no longer smiled in at your lattice—you had forgotten it altogether. And now it was night, and there was a knock at your door, but instead of rising to open, you buried your head beneath the clothes and hid from this terror. You were sick, and you thought, “I am dying.” That sickness was the Saviour's knock, but it only frightened you. It made you cry and promise that if you got well you would be very good, but it did not make you say, Come in Lord Jesus, come in quickly. You did not invite the dear Saviour to your bed-side, and out again into the school, and the walk, and the daily task—“Henceforth, O Saviour, thou art the Guide of my youth.” But the Saviour still lingered near you. He saw the door often opened, but it was not opened for him. He saw friends go in, and new feelings and projects went in—the world went in, and as you grew older fashion went in ; and many a rival of the Saviour went in, but whenever he drew near, and made as if he too would enter, there was a frown on your face, and you shook your head and closed the door. And as still he waited about, at last he saw death go in, and by and by a funeral came out—and as soon as the mourners had passed down the street, Jesus drew near once more, and knocking softly, sent word to your sorrowful chamber that the Master was come and calling for you. He bid them say that he was the Friend of

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Lazarus, and of his sisters Martha and Mary, and if you would open the door he would gladly come in, and would turn your sorrow into joy. But you liked better to weep in solitude than have your tears dried up by him who is the resurrection and the life, and you sent a civil excuse. The desire of your eyes was gone, and in so far as its choicest treasure was gone, your heart was empty; but even into that desolate spirit you would not receive the mourner's Friend. And as by and by you regained your spirits, and came out into the busy world, the long-suffering Redeemer accosted you in other ways. His providence had knocked in vain, and now he tried his word. He sent you startling messages; he convinced you of sin. He exclaimed, "what will it profit a man to gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" And sometimes as you read or heard you were aroused—you formed resolutions—you somewhat bestirred yourself. But still you had the impression that religion was a severe restraint, and that it would be a sombre day when you were obliged to surrender to its power. And he knocked again, and told you, "wisdom's ways are pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." And at last you did allow that godliness is gain, but you did not see how you can get salvation, and so with the Bible knocker, he struck you down again, and you heard his voice, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." And the Baptist knocked on his Lord's behalf, and said, "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world"—and this day Jesus himself knocks and says, "Behold I stand at the door; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him." If any man—dear brother, be thou that man. The moment you open your heart to Christ, heaven opens its door, and God opens the treasures of his grace to you.

"Jesus, thou dost not sue in vain!
Oh take what I can never give!
Thyself must give the power to man,
His proffered Saviour to receive;
While standing at the door thou art,
And pleading with this stubborn heart.

"Come in, thou suppliant Divine,
I hear thy voice and open now;
Take my poor heart, no longer mine,
Enter with all thy fulness now;
Take my poor heart ('tis all thine own, own),
And never leave this humble throne."

THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY EVENING, JULY 6, 1851,

BY THE REV. J. BEAUMONT, M.D.

AT EXETER HALL.

"Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe; for there is no difference."—Romans iii. 22.

WHAT a book the Bible is. How great its value; and of what various kinds is its value made up. To these very scriptures we are indebted for the only rational account of the formation of man, of the origin of evil, and of the peopling of the world. The Bible makes us acquainted with events far more remote than the most authentic of profane historians give us any account of. The Bible, moreover, unfolds to us the only satisfactory account of the being of a God; of his nature, of his essence, of his attributes, of his will, of his government, and of his providence. To the scriptures we are indebted for a system of morals far simpler than that of Aristotle, far purer than that of Plato, far more spiritual than that of Seneca—pure as the Graces around the throne of God in heaven;—a theory of morals compared with which all the theories of morals elaborated in the groves and academies of the ancient world are but as the lisplings of infancy, or the drivelling of idiocy. On all these accounts the Bible is the book for man; the very book for him—"a light to his feet and a lamp unto his path." But on none of these accounts, taken singly, nor on all of them, taken together, does the chief value of the Bible depend; the glory of the book, the charm of the volume, the special glory of these scriptures is, that they contain a revelation of the mercy of God to guilty man, that they answer that all-important and transcendent question—"What must I do to be saved?" They give a clear, full, unequivocal, intelligible, perfect answer to that great question, "What must I do to be saved?" and thus stamps the book with a unique, extraordinary, and transcendent value. It is comparatively of no use for a man to be learned in the history of the scriptures, in the scholarship of the scriptures, in the criticism of the scriptures, in the morals of the scriptures; if he remains unacquainted with, and unimpressed by that divine method of righteousness, that plan of justification which it is the specific object of the Bible to unfold, unwrap, unlock, set home, and apply. To none other of the writings of the Bible are we more indebted than to those of the Apostle Paul; all the writings of this man call for attention, and will well repay the profoundest and most intense application. On his faculties lay the dew of Hermon, on his lip lay the fire of heaven: he was a wise master builder, and well he laid the foundation; and "other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ."

There was a home-striking nervousness about Paul, a melting of tenderness, a soaring to a sublimity of which art never knew. None of the writings of Paul are more valuable than the Epistle to the Romans, just because in this Epistle we have the clearest statement and the fullest vindication of God's method of righteousness—

"O how unlike the complex work of man,
Is God's almighty simple saving plan."

And that "simple saving plan" is presented in this Epistle, is argued in this epistle, is affirmed in this epistle, is exhibited in this epistle, with a prodigiousness of power and clearness, so that he who runs may read.

My brethren, my fellow-countrymen, the need of a method of righteousness has its origin in the simple but startling fact, that man has sinned. God gave to man a law, a law eminently fitted for man; a law the very transcript of the lawgiver's will. My brethren, my fellow-countrymen, man was under the strongest obligation to have kept that law; but man has broken it—you—

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I—we—ALL, have broken the law—“there is none righteous, no, not one.” If any man turns round offended with this charge, and says, that unrighteousness in him is just a casualty, an accident, not intended; that he was overpowered by circumstances which he could not control, overmastered by temptation which he could not resist, that his *will* never was in the transgression, that his understanding never approved of it, that his mind always protested against it, that he is therefore more to be pitied than blamed—then the Apostle comes forward with another declaration, “there is none that understandeth.” Men are proud of their understanding, they regard it as a pure and perfect chrysolite; even when they go the length of allowing that there is something the matter with their actions, they still stand up for the integrity of their understanding. They say, they never meant anything bad; they never intended anything wrong. Now, if the hands of that clock were always pointing wrong, I don’t suppose that any one here would be able to believe that the action of the machinery within was perfectly right—and if a man’s actions are bad, his heart is not good! But since men are so proud of their understanding, and it is so difficult to bring them to believe that there is anything really seriously the matter, observe how the apostle brings forward a proof of what he says about the understanding; “There is none that seeketh after God!” Why God is “the perfection of beauty”—the father mind of the universe; the central point of bliss; the foundation of all beatitude; and if men understood that aright, they would seek after God; as sure as the young flower seeks the sun and opening its petals in the morning, and turning them towards the sun, asks the sun to kiss them into lowness and grace; as sure as the needle in the compass seeks for the pole, and trembles till it points to it; as sure as the water obeys the influences of the moon, and the attractions of the earth, in its ebbing and flowing, so certainly would the understanding seek after God if it were not utterly corrupt and debased. Then, observe, how the apostle takes up the whole subject of our depravity and presents it before us, with an eye that never winks, with a nerve that never trembles, and with an eye that never misses, he cuts down upon our corruption, through all the coverings that lie about it, all the bandages that shroud it, all the envelopes that conceal it—and cuts down till he comes to the core, and proves that man is tainted at the core, corrupt all over, all round, all through. So to speak, he says and shows, that all the organs, and all the tissues of a man’s moral nature are involved in the general condemnation; the lips, the eyes, the tongue, the throat, the head, the feet; “the throat is an open sepulchre;” “with the tongue they have used deceit;” “the poison of asps is under the lip;” “the mouth is full of cursing and bitterness;” “the feet are swift to shed blood;” “destruction and misery are in their path, and the way of peace they have not known;” “there is no fear of God before their eyes.”

And then after this wonderfully minute, vivid, graphic, all-comprehensive description of our depravity, he draws this sweeping inference—“Now we know that whatsoever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law.” That takes us in; that includes ourselves—“that every mouth may be stopped.” What, do you plead your innocence? Do you offer some palliation? “That every mouth may be stopped!” Do you offer some excuse? You may be good in your own eyes; you may be good in the eyes of some of your fellow men around you; but what the apostle affirms with all the weight of apostolical authority, is, that “the whole world is guilty before God.”

Now then, observe, how the apostle comes forward afterwards and announces the way of righteousness just like the eagle darting from its eyry in the cliff, and flying right in the face of the sun, there dip his wing, stretch his pinion, fire his eye; and away goes the apostle to communicate a new method of righteousness, a divine plan of justification. “But now,” says he, “the righteousness of God without the law is manifest, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all them that believe; for there is no difference.” May God bless his word. “O earth, earth, hear the word of the Lord!” “Faith comes by hearing.”

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We are met in a place, not our usual place of gathering, for sacred and evangelical purposes ; but why should we not meet here ? I am unspeakably happy to meet so many in the flesh and in the Lord ; I am happy to greet such a multitude gathered together from the provinces—brethren in the flesh, and in the Lord. "We welcome you ; we hail you ; for you are our brethren.

I would avail myself of this rare opportunity to preach the gospel to you. There is only one gospel. There is only one sun in the firmament, and we don't want another sun in nature. God forbid that we should have another sun—it would burn us all up ; but nature will need another sun before the church will need another Christ ! "One is your Master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren." "Grace, mercy, and peace be multiplied on you all, from God the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ."

Our topic is justification, the righteousness of God, "Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe ; for there is no difference." We shall notice—

I. THE NATURE OF THE RIGHTEOUSNESS BROUGHT TO US BY THE GOSPEL.

II. THE METHOD OF ITS APPLICATION.

III. ITS UNIVERSAL APPLICATION.

Consider what I say ; and if the Holy Ghost shall be pleased to carry home to your co-sciences what I should say to you, it will be like a fire, and it will burn up all the briars and thorns that are setting in array against the truth. May the Holy Ghost descend on the preacher and on the hearer.

I. We have to consider THE NATURE OF THE RIGHTEOUSNESS BROUGHT TO US BY THE GOSPEL—the righteousness itself, here called "the righteousness of God." This is a phrase, as used in the writings of the apostle Paul, which has two significations—the justice of God, and conformity to law. It cannot here mean the justice of God, because it is not true, either historically or theologically to say of the justice of God that it is upon a man. When Paul says, therefore, that the righteousness of God is "upon" a man, it is not the justice of God that is intended. It must mean then, conformity to law ; provided for, and brought about by a special arrangement of the Providence of God, and therefore it is called "the righteousness of God." In his epistles you find that the apostle makes mention of two sorts of conformity to law ; the one fancied, the other real ; the one pharisaical, the other evangelical ; the one ours, the other God's. In the ninth chapter of this epistle, he says, "What shall we say then : that the Gentiles which followed not after righteousness have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith. But Israel which followed after the law of righteousness hath not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore ? because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law." In the beginning of the next chapter we have a passage constructed in the same manner. He says, "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge, for they being ignorant of God's righteousness"—there is one righteousness—"and going about to establish their own righteousness"—there is another righteousness—"have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law"—that is, the *scope* of the law—"For righteousness, to every one that believeth." And there is just one passage more which I will recite to you. Paul says, "I count all things but loss, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, even the righteousness which is of God by faith." I know not how these passages may strike you, but they strike me on this wise—the object of the apostle in constructing these sentences, clearly is to drive us out of one righteousness, and shut us up to another. Then what is the righteousness of God ? What is the matter of it ? Is it faith ? I am asked by some one ; is it faith ; for as much as in some of these passages it is called the righteousness of faith ? I answer no, in no wise ; no account. Faith is an act of man's own mind, whereas the righteousness of God is on a man—faith is the travelling forth of a sinner's emptiness to meet the Saviour's fulness ; the Saviour's fulness is one thing,

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and the sinner's emptiness going forth to meet him is another thing. Faith and the righteousness of God are not identical, for the text says, "it is on him." I am asked by some, if these good works which flow from the exercise of faith, in the Divine influence on the believng man, are the righteousness of God? I answer no! and I give this answer to this question for the same reason that I gave it to the other question—these good works are ours, just as the fruits gathered from the soil are called the fruits of the earth; they are the product of the influence of the sun, and rain, and dew, and a million atmospheric influences acting on the tree and the soil, and the fruits produced upon the tree are called the fruits of the earth; so those good works which are produced in the exercise of faith, as the result of a Divine influence on the believing man, are the man's, and he will be judged according to them at the last day; but righteousness is not man's, it is God's. Besides, I am not aware that these good works are absolutely perfect, and to be accepted by God they must be really and absolutely perfect. But if for argument sake I were to allow that they are so, I am met by the question, what is to be done with that black cloud of the sinner's past transgressions,—that thunder cloud which is hanging over him, charged with electricity, fringed with lightning and ready, at any moment, to burst on the sinner's head? Enough, enough; I feel it is enough; the righteousness is not ours, it is the righteousness of God. When God sent forth his Son into the world, made of a woman, made under the law, it was that he might take every precept of the law of God, and fulfil it, illustrate it, exemplify it, and he could say, and he did say, "which of you convinceth me of sin?" "Sin is the transgression of the law."

But observe, the same necessity that led him to remain under the precept of the law, also compelled him to be under the penalty of the law; for the law under which he was made, was not a law simply; it was a broken law, a dishonoured law, and a law claiming and demanding satisfaction. When the Son of God was made of a woman, and made under the law, there was heard the most awful voice that ever was heard in the universe yet, "Awake, O sword, against the man that is my fellow, and smite the shepherd"—smite him!! When there was a man in the world that was Jehovah's fellow there was some one who could magnify the law, in smiting whom justice could obtain its demands. The sword of justice smote him, struck him, cut him! The sword of justice had a commission to smite the man that was Jehovah's fellow; it smote him in Bethlehem; it smote him all along the highway of his life, even to Calvary. On Calvary the strokes of the sword fell heavy; the glances of that sword then darkened the sun; the strokes of the sword shook earth, shook hell; it kept smiting and smiting the man that was God's fellow, till at last he cried, "It is finished." Then the sword fell down at the foot of the cross, hushed, lulled, pacified; and it lay there till the third hallowed morning, when it was found changed into a sceptre of mercy; and that sceptre of mercy has been waving among mankind ever since, and it is waving now; it is waving in this assembly; it is so waving here that any one may stretch the hand, and touch the sceptre, and whoever touches it shall live, and may live for ever.

The apostle says, "EVEN the righteous of God," as much as if he had said, and what a righteousness! "EVEN the righteousness of God!" What a complete righteousness! What a perfect righteousness! It must be complete, it must be perfect! It is the doing of the Lord our God! What a glorious righteousness it is! Sinner, get it on! get it on! the being clothed with it, it shall hide all your abominations and loathsomeness, and you shall become lovely in the eye of God himself. He will see no spot in you! no spot of guilt remaining—

"While Jesus' blood through earth and sky,
Mercy, free, boundless mercy cry."

With this righteousness on there is not an angel from heaven moving on in the universe on some errands of benevolence and kindness, that would not, if he met you, stop and say, All hail! thou art highly favoured of the Lord! "Even the righteousness of God." What a righteousness! It is an ever-

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lasting righteousness. I like something that will last. Something that will not wear out. When God made the soul he made it to last. He wrote upon it—"I made this to last." The sun will not last! The moon will not last! The solar system will not last! ALL the stars will flee away; but this shall last: the soul will last, and when Christ made his righteousness, he made it to last. My fellow sinners, get it on; wear it! fold it well about you when you go down into the swellings of Jordan; and then, all that I have to say is, you will be righteous to all eternity. "Even the righteousness of God."

And now let me ring the chimes in your ears; let me fetch up some chrystals out of the cabinet which contains this glorious truth. "This is the name, whereby he shall be called, the Lord our righteousness." "Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look upon the earth beneath, for the heavens shall vanish away like smoke, and the earth shall wax old like a garment, and they that dwell therein shall die in like manner, but my salvation shall be for ever, and my righteousness shall never be abolished."

Surely shall one say, "in the Lord have I righteousness and strength, and in the Lord shall all Israel be justified." "Christ is made into us for wisdom, for righteousness, for sanctification, and for redemption." Have you got this righteousness? Have your eyes seen this salvation? Or are you drivelling life away in attempts to make a righteousness of your own? This you may attempt, but you can never succeed. As well might you attempt to walk the starry firmament of heaven with your clayey feet; as well might you attempt to raise the ruined Archangel from the bottomless pit, and wipe the brand off his brow with a single move of your hand, as attempt to make a righteousness of your own; it is the righteousness of God.

II. THE METHOD OF ITS APPLICATION.

"Even the righteousness of God, which is by faith of our Lord Jesus Christ unto all, and upon all them that believe." As far as the offer of a righteousness is concerned, it is universal—"unto all." Be you who you may, or what you may, come from whence you may, let your name or condition be what they may—the offer of this righteousness comes to you. It comes to one as much as to another. Be you the fairest Pharisee that ever walked in the light of his own eyes, or the foulest profligate reeking out of hell—be you a fifty pence debtor or a five hundred pence debtor, Barbarian, Scythian, bond or free—this righteousness comes as much to you as to any one else. It is "unto all." Hear the tidings contained in the charter given to regulate the distribution and circulation of the gospel. "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." Till that charter is torn up by him who gave it—till these words are cut out of the book by him that put them into it—I shall offer this righteousness to every one of you. It is "unto all." No man on earth, no devil from hell, no angel from heaven, shall hinder me telling you, oh! sinner, that there is righteousness for you! Look this way! The white flag waves, and the silver trumpet sounds, and the note of invitation is given—"Ho! every one, every one that thirsteth, come ye unto the waters."

But while the offer is thus unrestricted, the application of the righteousness is to them that believe. Now do not look to me for a philosophical definition of the meaning, or a metaphysical account of what is included in believing. "Believing" is a simple term, a simple term is a term expressing a simple idea; and a simple idea is an idea which is as plain at first, as it is at last. It is an idea which is so plain at first, that if you try to make it plainer by heaping up a number of words and a quantity of philosophy, you "darken counsel" and mystify the subject. It is an idea seen at first as clearly as at last; therefore, if I do not attempt any metaphysical or philosophical definition of believing, it is because such attempts on the part of learned men, have often rather increased than at all alleviated the matter. I would rather ask, "Do you believe? That's the question. Let it go round and circulate amongst you! Dost thou believe on the Son of God? I am afraid that there are some here who are so far from believing for a righteousness, that they have never ye. felt their need of a righteousness. "If we say we have no sin

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we deceive ourselves," but "if we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins."

Come, then, fellow sinner. Bring out your sin and confess it to God, and he will bring out his righteousness. Bring it out as Cranmer brought out his hand which in a moment of great bodily weakness, mental depression, stormy persecution, and strong temptation, signed away his faith—that hand which afterwards signed also a recantation of his recantation, and an abjuration of his abjuration; and when he had recanted his recantation and abjured his abjuration, the enemies of the truth brought him to the stake, when, before the flames had singed his hoary locks he held out his right hand, exclaiming "This is it! This is the hand that signed! This is the hand that sinned! And," (thrusting it into the flames,) "let it perish first!" My fellow sinner bring out your sin and Christ will bring out his righteousness. Come a little nearer! Come as near to him as the celebrated woman mentioned in the gospel did, who wept so that she washed his feet with her tears and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Yes! she brought tears and ointment; but neither of these brought her salvation. Her penitence brought the tears, and her zeal brought the ointment; but neither of these saved her. It was her *faith* that saved her! To put it as the Puritans would put it—to use their quaint mode of expression—when repentance comes to God, it comes with a big gushing tear; when patience comes with its broad back it bears a heavy burden; when zeal comes it comes with a flaming revenge; but when faith comes it appears with an empty hand to get all, take all, and carry all away, Lord, increase our faith!

Now, then, do you believe? The Lord help your unbelief! If you have believed then you have experienced what the Apostle Paul calls, "the peace of believing." Ah! there is no peace like that, just as there is no sweetness like the sweetness of the honeycomb. There are doubtless many sweet substances beside honey, but nothing is *so* sweet as it is. Why? Because the little laborious bee all the live long summer is kissing and collecting from every flower its sweetness as it opens to the summer's sun on the mountain's side, or in the stretching glen; and after the labourer has kissed, collected, and collocated all the sweetness from thousands and tens of thousands of flowers, it mixes all up in its little laboratory, and the product is that sweetest of all sweet things—honey; and just because the honey is so very sweet, because it is made in that particular way, so the "peace of believing" is so very precious because Christ has made it in his way. By the blood of the cross he obtained and procured it for us, and then handed it over to us by a deed of formal consignment, saying, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you."

What peace is this? Why, it is the very peace of God, which it is said, "passeth all understanding," I cannot describe to you how profound it is, or how rich it is; I can merely say that it is the very opposite of the wretchedness of the unbeliever; and if you ask me to describe that wretchedness, how am I to do it? There is a description in the gospel of a man who was possessed with a demon, and who cut himself with knives and stones, and in company with other demons, horrible and execrable as himself, he spent his nights amidst the tombs. That is a picture of wretchedness, than which I know none more consummate and finished. The explanation of that is, the fiend in him boasted of himself that he was no common fiend; he said his name was "Legion." Just as the wretchedness of this man was so deep and consummate because it was no common fiend that possessed him, so is the peace of the believer a profound peace because the name of its author is no common name. Just as all the flower is in the bud, just as all the day is in the dawn, just as all the child is in the man so all peace is included in the peace of believing—peace with God and with conscience, peace on earth and in heaven; and all sorts of peace are in the peace of believing!

Now, then, I have merely to show you, for a moment, how believing in Christ for a righteousness ensures conformity to law. "Do we make void the law through faith? God forbid; we establish the law." Here I will make use of a supposition, by way of illustration, which nothing but a miracle

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could enable you to realize. Suppose a man saw the law of God, and brought all his faculties but one to bear upon it. Suppose this faculty for a time was completely taken out of him and put behind a curtain on this side of which he is sitting with the law of God before his eyes. It is man's recollectiveness of his violation of this law that I purpose to deprive him of, and place behind the curtain. Bereft of this, how he gazes with admiration on the beauty and glory of God's law, exclaiming, "how worthy is the lawgiver." Suppose another man beholding this one looking on that most holy thing the law of God, which he has so openly and repeatedly violated, in this way. The spectator perceives that this poor man sees only half the truth, and that if this curtain were cut away, the whole truth would confront him. Seeing this, you strive to approach and lift the veil. But you fear that you may do it so widely, indelicately, and incautiously, that ten thousand to one that when the reality came rushing on the poor man—that he was cursed by the law,—he would dash it down and fly away in despair, and become as the monster of malevolence to whom we have referred. But if you call on your fellow men, what can they do? They are just as powerless as you are. If you called upon an angel, with his soft, quiet, delicate hand, what can he do? He cannot absolve him. It may be, moreover, that that angel is the very being whose business it is to summon this man to the solemn judgment. In this sore dilemma you fall down upon your knees, and exclaim, "Thou, and thou alone oh! Jesus canst do this! Thou wilt perform it wisely, delicately, tenderly, and mercifully. Thou, and thou alone canst perform it with a due consideration of all the consequences; thou alone mayest lift the veil, for with that self-same hand with which thou unveilst his guilt thou wilt point him to pardon through thy bleeding side." What effect has the law of God upon him now? Does he dash it down and fly away from it? No! "Oh, how I love thy law," he says, and then comes sanctification, justification, and righteousness—"Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe; for there is no difference."

III. THE UNIVERSAL APPLICATION.

I pass on now to make some application of what has been said for "there is no difference." "No difference!" I apply this first in directing you to the necessity which lies on every one of you to obtain the righteousness of God. Oh! my fellow-sinner, if you are without it, you are living in peril every moment; and if you die without it, you are lost and undone for ever! Do not turn round upon me and say, it is very unreasonable on my part to insist upon it, that every man shall stand side by side on the same platform for a righteousness—that all shall take exactly the same ground for this righteousness. Why? There is "no difference;" "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God; there is none righteous, no, not one;" and, if there is no difference in the disease, why should there be any difference in the remedy? Some may sin oftener than others, and in a manner at once more provoking to God, and more injurious to society; but there is no really essential difference. I know that ten thousand sins will sink a sinner deeper into hell than one sin; but I also know that *one* sin is as *sufficient* to sink a man into hell as a million, though not so deep. Have we not had terrific experience of the effects of one sin? Take the case of Adam. It was not the ten thousand sins which followed the first, but that alone which ruined the race. That one sin did it all—dashing the ship on the rock; that one transaction made bankrupt the entire human family, and "There is no difference."

Come down then, my fellow sinner, from your fancied superiority, and stand by the side of the chief of sinners, and cry, "God be merciful to me a sinner," for there is no difference in the encouragement held out to you. Why stand ye afar off? Draw nigh. You are as welcome to this blessing as any one who ever partook of it. Noah found it, David described it, Paul experienced it; but these men were not more welcome than you are; "for there is no difference." Christ called for a towel, and put off his upper garment, girded himself with the towel, took water, and washed the feet of his disciples. He is here now, but his basin is filled not with water,

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but with blood, and he is going round from row to row, and from individual to individual, through the mouth of his servant, offering to cleanse you all by his blood. Do you say you never can be clean? He says, "Let me try. Let me wash thee. My blood cleanseth from all unrighteousness. What, if thy sins are as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; and though they be red like crimson, they shall be white as wool. Let me wash thee;" There is no difference. Don't stand trembling there. Draw near! It is "unto all, and upon all them that believe". The only difference is between the believer and unbeliever.

What makes you tremble sinner? Is the hawk abroad? Have you caught a glimpse of his fiery eye, of his sharp talons, and of his beak whetted for destruction? Once a little bird was perched on a tree in a gentleman's garden, a large fierce hawk perceived and pursued it from bough to bough, and from tree to tree, till at length the poor little terrified thing was almost overtaken and fled, as a last resort, to the bosom of the gentleman who was observing it. There it was safe from the talons of the hawk. Now, sinner, the hawk of justice is abroad after *you*! Fly! Fly! Come! "Oh! Whither? Whither? There is no refuge in earth or heaven." Yes, there is. Escape to the Saviour's bleeding side. He is waiting to take you in, and make you clean. Come to him exclaiming—

"Rock of ages cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in thee!"

In conclusion, let me say first, how thankful I am to have such a gospel as this to preach! I preach it with delight to perishing sinners. Oh! how admirably it suits their case! How exactly it accommodates itself to all their helplessness and vileness! Does music suit the ear, entering into the cavity, flowing along the channels reaching to the brain, and acting thence upon the soul—does music fit the ear? Does light fit the eye—coming off from the body of the sun, passing over objects in its way, entering the eye, acting through the brain upon the soul? How beautifully the light fits the eye. Does the key fit the lock, turning its wards, shooting its bolts, and removing all obstructions? Music does not fit the ear, the light does fit the eye, the key does not fit the lock, so well as the gospel fits the sinner. It so precisely meets his case. It is all he wants. I preach this gospel with pleasure. It is good tidings, and I announce them with joy. I publish them with delight. Mine is the white flag. Mine is not the solemn trumpet of brass, but the silver trumpet of the glorious gospel.

Let us take care that we do not imitate the Jews in going about to establish our own righteousness. Don't you carry on that controversy any longer with your Maker. It was carried on by the Jews, and kept up by them generation after generation. Don't you keep it up and carry it on. Give up. Submit to establish the righteousness of God, which is Christ the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth. How thankful am I that I have such a method of righteousness to make known to you to-day! My tongue has described it, and with its faltering accents has told you of the righteousness of God. Accept, receive, embrace it! It is the power of God to every one that believeth, and shall we not communicate it to others? What! Shall we have this medicine of life, and not hand it to others? Hold forth the word of life! Tell of the way of salvation! When I cease to speak of this righteousness may my ministerial tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, and when I forget to proclaim it, may my right hand forget her cunning. I have no gospel but this; there is none other; and he that believeth not shall be damned.

May God bless his word. Amen.

GREAT GATHERINGS.

A Lecture

DELIVERED ON TUESDAY EVENING, JULY 15, 1851,

BY THE REV. JOHN STOUGHTON,

(Of Kensington.)

AT EXETER HALL.

Before the Young Men's Christian Association.

The gathering of the people within the Crystal Palace is a striking part of that scene of marvels. To lean over the front of the gallery at one of the transept corners, when the upper and lower floors are thickly studded with spectators, when some sixty or seventy thousand human beings are within the gigantic building, is to gaze on a spectacle which inspires us with astonishment. There they are waving to and fro, reminding us of old poetic images—the forest—corn-field—river, and ocean yielding to gentle winds—pleasant emotions, to say the very least, are awakened in minds of even slight sensibility, akin to what are ever raised when we look at a vast number of objects of a like character, covering a widely extended surface, such as the green tree tops that clothe the bosom of the valley beneath us—the crested waves of the sea on a fresh spring day—or the sparkling stars on the midnight sky. The pleasure is dashed with the sublime, more or less, as the spectator realizes the nature of the objects on which he looks, not mere forms of matter, but beings endowed with thought, not mere things, but persons, men and women with souls inbreathed from the lips of God. With the idea of their faculties and origin came the remembrance that they are immortal, and forthwith the spacious nave becomes an image of the world; a street lined with the wonders of God's creation, and the works of man's busy hands, leading up to the gates of the Great City of Eternity, and crowded with wayfarers on their march to the Hall of Judgment, the place of final doom. How many of all the teeming multitude are there who ever think of that fact, ever feel in its full power the consciousness of such a destiny? How many are there who so think and feel as habitually to live under the conviction, and improve it to the high purpose of preparing for some blessed and glorious lot in the infinite hereafter? How many are there who with their admiration of natural and artistic beauty, mingle the love of holy God-like beauty, beauty of heart, beauty of soul, beauty composed of the true, the just, the loving—the peerless element of thought, affection, and will? How many are there holy pilgrims through this World's Fair to those pure unearthly realms of light and love, which lie on the other side of death's river? Such inquisitive musings steal over a meditative religious spirit with melancholy effect in the post of observation we have named. Other thoughts arise—there are in the multitude unity and variety combined. The scene is one, yet many. The multitude are of a common race, a common form, a common nature. They have wants in common, thoughts in common, feelings in common. They have now met for a common purpose, and are the subjects of a common gratification and delight. But streaks of many coloured

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hue are painted across that back ground of unity. They are men various in their costume, complexion, speech, various in their birth-place, their home, their early teachers, their childish thoughts, their subsequent culture, their present habits. The people in these respects outrival the place and its exhibition. The place is one, yet manifold. One beautiful, spacious, accommodative edifice, revealing throughout a unity of design, yet having in it the elements of various structures, the conservatory, the manufactory, the palace, the cathedral, the temple, blending into one architectural trophy, the Gothic aisle, the Italian dome, the Oriental arcade. The Exhibition is manifold, yet one—containing things gathered from the mine, the forest, and the deep—things wrought on anvil, bench, and loom—yet all signs of civilization, proofs that God has given the lordship of the earth to man, all brought together by common consent for a common purpose, and constituting one common well organized and harmonious display of man's skill, and toil, and taste, in partnership with his brother man. The oneness of the multitude is a more striking unity, when we reflect on it, than that either of the treasures on which they gaze, or the building in which they are gathered, while the manifoldness of both is surpassed by the varieties physical, mental, moral, and social concentrated in that multitude.

And, then, what scope for speculative moralizing does this great concourse afford to a mind observant of mankind, accustomed to individualize the mass; knowing how to sketch off salient points of character, and to anatomize and lay bare the inner structure of the soul. What work for such a man as John Foster to sit on the spot we have alluded to, and to muse upon the multitudes. How fully would he realise the fact, that scarcely to two persons would the spectacle appear alike; that the one objective Exhibition would become in the subjective views of it as diversified as the spectators; because we all see things through a medium of our own, and the eye, or rather the mind, gives a colouring to the landscape or picture; because we are differently constituted and gifted, having a variety of sympathies and tastes; because, in addition to the peculiar idiosyncrasy we brought into the world, we have been differently cultured, have been thrown into different associations, have been differently employed, and have contracted different habits! Such an observer as I have imagined, would pourtray the gay coxcomb who had come to lounge in the Exhibition, because it was the fashion, hoping to secure some complacent stares in return for his own, for which he has made studious provision in the entire fashionable cut of his garments, and the rich luxuriance of pet whiskers and moustache. The philosophizing censor up aloft, would doubtless single out the gay damsel fluttering about in the full orb'd fashion of the season, thinking about other things than art, yet perchance giving a glance now and then to some magnificent object, and exclaiming, "very pretty," with as much propriety in the application of language as a certain lady displayed, to whom Coleridge said satirically, when in the midst of some very fine scenery, she used that convenient phrase, "Yes, madam, *pretty* is the word." He would look with interest on the rustic gazing with honest curiosity on this array of wonders, with no objects in his memory with which to compare them, but the church and the yew trees, and the squire's garden and furniture. He would follow the youth of mechanical genius as he examined ingenious contrivances, perfectly new, opening up to him fresh world's of invention. He would sympathize with the poet in his wild imaginings, and most of all with the moralist and divine, blending divine speculations and beliefs with this visible beauty and splendour. Nor would he fail to look with congratulation on young souls full of healthy joy, bringing to the sight the sunshine of their own happy thoughts through which to see it at all; and to turn with deep condolence to one and another visitor in weeds, come from some house of mourning, at the solicitation of considerate friendship, but beholding every thing bedimmed and dulled by sorrow's shade as we pass by flowers in a gloomy day. And lastly, with what admiration would such a spectator look on the illustrious and royal pair, with their little ones in their hands, threading the mazes of art, on a level with the multitude, patterns of conjugal

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affection and parental care, and full of sympathy with the beautiful, the benevolent, the good, the free. The Prince the founder of the festival, the Sovereign its zealous patron.

But we must put a termination to such musings. They are naturally suggested by the gathering which has given rise to the present short Course of Lectures, and suggested the subject on which I am to speak to-night. Indeed, the gathering of 1851 is one of the greatest gatherings the world has ever witnessed—in many respects most peculiar, and apparently to us, of such mighty importance as is destined to tell upon unborn generations. Fittingly, therefore, may it prove the starting point for a survey of great gatherings at large. The Germans have a saying, "you cannot see the wood for the trees," and that saying may be applied to our present theme which brings out such a vast collection of associated facts, that we may almost say they overshadow it, and bewilder and confound us when we attempt its investigation. We shall aim at some sort of order in what we may advance, and our method of arrangement will, we trust, help us to develop some important principles.

I. We shall begin with the earliest gathering which history records, and shall find it to turn out a specimen of too large a class of assemblages in this world of ours. We allude to the gathering at Shinar. It occurred soon after the Deluge. The world inhabited by man had, with all it contained, been buried beneath a flood of waters, divinely sent for the punishment of transgression, leaving, out of all the race, only a single family. Upborne on the wide-flowing waves, Noah and his sons and daughters, with pairs of the animal creation, had floated in that wonderful ship which made its voyage on a sea where it met no sail; where it had no helm to steer its course, but lay there guarded and guided by the hand of God. Our world had presented an opposite aspect to what it does now. Instead of busy towns and cities, stored with manufactures, and environed by scenes of husbandry, one flat bed of water, bearing on its sullen tide a solitary speck of art, met the view of an angel traveller, if such an one passed near the surface of the flooded earth. No very considerable time had passed since the Deluge, when on the banks of the Euphrates, on a spot where subsequently one of the greatest cities of antiquity arose, men with the late disastrous event fresh in their recollection, banded together to attempt a great exploit. The book of Genesis is our authority for the fact, and to use the words of a distinguished German critic, there is, perhaps, no where else to be found a narrative so venerable for its antiquity, or so important in the history of civilization, in which we have at once preserved the traces of primeval international commerce, the first political associations, and the first erection of secure and permanent dwellings. "A comparison," adds another learned writer, "a comparison of this narrative with the absurd or visionary picture which the Greeks and Romans give of the primitive condition of mankind, will gratify the student of the Bible, and confirm the faith of the Christian, by shewing the marked difference there is between the history contained in Genesis and the fictions of the poet, or the traditions of the mythologist." Who were the individuals employed in the memorable undertaking we are not informed, nor is the leader of the project named by Moses, though Nimrod is mentioned in that relation by Josephus, and with much probability. But their project is described, and their motives are indicated. "They used bricks for stone, and slime for mortar, and they said, Go to let us build a city and a tower, whose top may reach to heaven." Acquainted with building and architecture to an extent which indicates that they had advanced in civilization, they aimed at the erection of some magnificent, lofty, and lasting structure. They did it for these ends as we are informed—*first*, that they might make to themselves a name—and *secondly*, that they might not be scattered upon the face of the earth. The sequel of the story shows that their ends were totally disapproved by God. The confounding of their speech, the defeat of their purpose, and the scattering of their community, by some immediate interposition, stamp their motives as evil. The name which they wished to make for themselves could not have been the honest, virtuous, and honourable reputation which

every nation and individual not only may, but ought to establish. Their motive must have been a desire for vain, impious self-glory. It must have involved the idolizing of their own fame, the exaltation of themselves, and their doings above the providence and authority of the Supreme Ruler. Then, again—their plan for keeping together must have contravened God's law. They had surely been taught that it was the Divine will that they should colonize the earth, that its broad lands were so divided among them, that they were to break up into nations, and to plant the world with distinct communities, God having in the creation of the world, by diversifying its surface, by binding it round with mountain chains, by cutting it up here and there, into rivers and seas, prepared for the execution of the scheme of his providence. This law they broke. They determined to prevent the development of nationalities, or to crush them in the germ, by the establishment of one all-absorbing empire. They could not have meant to live together simply in good feeling and brotherhood, a thing which God intended them and all nations ever to do,—they must have meant to found a monarchy, or some kind of government, which would include the race, and make certain ambitious spirits masters of mankind and proprietors of the world. In addition to these ends, it has been inferred from the narrative, by some learned critics, that they had another end in view, namely, to offer worship to the Host of heaven in, or upon, their lofty tower or temple. If we adopt the last opinion, as well as the two former conclusions, then we have three elements of evil in that original great gathering; *First*, pride; *Secondly*, the lust of dominion; and, *Thirdly*, idolatrous superstition.

In these respects, the gathering at Babel is a specimen of many a great gathering since! Take the three ideas just expressed, and pass over the history of vast human assemblages, and mark how, one after another, these ideas, magnet-like, gather round them in thick clusters associated facts.

Pride! You may write it as the heading of a long chapter, made up of authentic stories touching the subject of this Lecture. Was not the pride of race and nation, the vain, glorious boasting of their own superiority, the primary impulse, the master motive which throbbed in the bosoms of the old Greeks when they met in concourse that was immense—so as to be called “the whole assembly of united Greece,” on the banks of the Alpheus, to celebrate the Olympic Games? Though there were some redeeming features in the character of those celebrations, did not the pure Hellenic republics, who had the charge of the festival, claim for themselves the exclusive right of engaging in the conflict, and competing for the prize, taunting others as of baser blood and meaner ancestry, so that when on one occasion Alexander, the son of Amyntas—whose argive descent was suspected—sought to enter the lists, he was repelled by the scornful shout. “This is a contest between Greeks, and not with barbarians.” The Olympic gathering was an organized fellowship, a form of union which shines out with a pleasing lustre among the clouds of strife which sweep, in wintry tumult over the scenes of old Grecian times—it cemented alliances, and strengthened ancient ties, and cherished the memory of a common origin, but when we look at it steadily, we see that its glories rose out of prejudice, and its brightest light was the fire of pride. Did not the same passion, at a later period, inflame the breasts of those who assembled in city squares, and castle courts, and green sward plains, to perform or to witness the tilt and the tourney? When knights rushed to the encounter, to break their lances with antagonists, did not individual, ancestral, or national pride, nerve their arm, and flush their cheek, and did not sympathetic pride move the wedged-in spectators as they raised their shouts of triumphant congratulations? And, then, when we turn to look at festive scenes, legal, republican, or civic—when the memory of the historical reader reviews the banquet, the pageant, the procession—when we think of the crowning of kings, the inauguration of rulers, and the rejoicings commemorative of signal events—when we reflect on feudal or commercial festivals, and visit the Bruges or Venice of the middle ages, to gaze on a prince's reception, or a doge's marriage with the Adriatic—when the thousand scenes of excitement, gaiety, and splendour, of which there are

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specimens, and which old historians, as patient as they were picturesque, have recorded in their pages, pass before our imagination, does not pride in manifold forms peer out most distinctly from amidst all the brilliant shew? In these things have not kings and people, nations and cities, been thinking of themselves, ambitious of getting, (or of displaying when got) a great name? Is not pride seen planning every device, flaunting in every banner, sparkling in every jewel, waving in every plume? Is not pride heard in the music of every song, the burst of every shout?

And the second element of the Babel gathering, the lust of dominion, has not that been repeated times without number, since Nimrod the great hunter first sought a conqueror's fame? Just think of the army of Xerxes assembled at Critalla, in Cappadocia—troops gathered from every quarter of the Persian empire, with contingents from nations most remote. "Nomad hordes from the Steppes of Central Asia, dark coloured tribes from the rivers flowing into the Indus, and negroes from the inland parts of Africa, as well as from the intermediate countries"—while the ports of Phenicia and Ionia, and other maritime dependencies, supply their ships to transfer into Europe the swarming host. Just think of Alexander the Great crossing the Hellespont with his far-famed, phalanx—one mass of mortals, 18,000 in number, beside 17,000 more of soldiery—making altogether an army of 35,000, composed of Macedonians and other Greeks, beside superadded contingents from Illyria, Thrace, and other countries. Think too of the three million men, men whom, at different times, the great Roman, Julius Cæsar, gathered under his eagles. Think also of the 800,000, levies from all Europe, at one time assembled under Napoleon beyond the Vistula. And as you advert to the nature and import of these gatherings, you recognize in their great leaders one terrible absorbing passion—the spirit of the Babel builders grown into gigantic dimensions, developed with the power of a Satan-like ambition—the lust of dominion, seeking to break down all nationalities but one—seeking to extinguish all empires but one—seeking to blot out all names but one—their own. The rivers and seas which the God of nature had drawn as lines, and the mountains which he had built up as boundary walls, between nation and nation, they crossed and sealed—setting at nought the manifest purpose of the God of nature in the appointment of these barriers; bent on the reduction of the whole earth, to a broad level plain that should serve as a platform for one huge over-towering throne. Such lust of dominion in carrying out its object depopulates where it seeks to reign, and destroys the subjects whom it seeks to govern. "Blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke," are the signs of its march, and the heralds of its triumph; and the only thing actually achieved by the great conquerors of whom history boasts is, the raising of amount of slaughtered men to be burnt as a watch fire beside the heroes in their long death slumber—like the human relics which the vultures had spared after the battle of the pyramids, piled into heaps, as we are told they were, to warm Napoleon at night as he lay down to sleep in the desert. Ambition involving such defiance of the laws of nature, and Providence, and such atrocious inhumanity can never permanently succeed: therefore, all attempts at one absorbing dominion, all attempts at setting up an universal monarchy, have shared in the fate of the first attempt on the plain of Shinar. The builders of such proud towers have been scattered, and the fabrics left a melancholy ruin—a warning to rulers in all coming time, teaching them to renounce aggressive war, to stifle ambition for victory as soon as it begins to burn, to respect distinct nationalities, to allow that others have rights as well as themselves, to recognize in patriotism, wherever it exists, a sacred passion—and in the place of prejudices and antipathies against other countries, to cherish a spirit of universal peace and good will.

Other gatherings such as at the Roman triumphs and ovations, and the less ancient celebrations of victory such as those which in former times filled London with excitement, when the Black Prince led the King of France through Cheapside, in all the pomp of chivalry, amidst a forest of sympathizing spectators; and when Henry the Fifth came back from Agincourt

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and crossed London Bridge amidst all the pomp and show which the age could furnish. Such gatherings came under the general head we have described, for they were all animated by a spirit of martial ambition, which is only another name for the lust of power—the London triumph as much as the Roman one. And gratifying is it now to think of the contrast between our city of the nineteenth century and our city of the fifteenth—*then* burning with defiance against France, breathing out threatenings and slaughter, and seeking to make her kingdom an appanage to the British crown; *now* cherishing toward the same country and the rest of Europe a brotherly affection, and giving a cordial welcome, on terms of perfect equality, to all the sons and daughters of that rich old land—and all other lands throughout the world—as they crowd our gates to keep with us arts high festival.

And the third element in the Babel gathering has re-appeared in a great diversity of forms. Superstition, idolatrous superstition, has been the central principle, and the encircling bond of many a human assemblage. To worship their gods was the object of many a multitude in old Pagan times. Not that men of different lands met together in religious fellowship to worship the same divinity—that was a sight the ancient world could never see. Religion was national, the gods were national, the rites were national. They were marks of division, if not points of repulsion. They separated men, but never did, nor never could unite them. Vast crowds of Egyptians, vast crowds of Greeks, vast crowds of Romans did honour respectively to some deity or deities; but Egyptians, Greeks, and Romans, were never seen paying spontaneous homage at a common shrine. The union of men in worship is one of the unrivalled triumphs of Christianity. In modern times, in the present day, idolatry is the magnet which draws together some of the greatest assemblies which the Hindoo ever sees. The people throng from distant parts to celebrate the feast of Juggernaut. Over the heathen world such clusterings of mankind are common. The eye of heaven often rests on such dark spots. And in what is called christendom, how many a religious gathering there has been of which the basis was some superstitious service—involving what we know not how to distinguish from idolatry. Such were the gathering of pilgrims, the gathering of crusaders, and also other gatherings, half or wholly religious, in connection with which the ceremonies of the Roman church occupied a conspicuous place. Nor are the multitudes which throng the aisles of many a cathedral in Europe, and elsewhere, free from the taint which defiled the old Babel worshippers.

Thus, then, have the darker aspects of that early gathering—its pride and lust of dominion and superstition been mirrored and multiplied on the stream of history.

II. We shall now turn to another great gathering, a contrast to this first and standing at the head of an opposite class, we shall leave the crowd round Shinar's Tower, to look at Judea's Temple

And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. People from the East, Parthians and Medes, and Elamites, and dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judea; people from the North, Cappadocia, Pontus, Asia, Phrygia, and Pamphylia; people from the South, Egypt, the parts Lybia about Cyrene; people from the West, strangers from Rome, like all the rest, Jews and proselytes, people from sea and desert, isle and rock, Cretes and Arabians. Here was a gathering, which from the variety of places they came from, if not from the varieties of families and race to which they belonged, (though these among the proselytes no doubt were numerous,) might be esteemed a world-gathering. They were met for a common religious purpose; to worship the Lord God of Israel; the true God, according to a method he had appointed. They were come to celebrate a divine festival; the festival of the ingathering of the first fruits, in that land of plenty, that field which the Lord had blessed, and to be themselves, as the event proved, the first fruits of a spiritual harvest, which the Lord's reapers have ever since been gathering into his garner. Here they were, in purpose and design, in spirit and feeling, already different from the crowd at Babel: destined to become more different still. They were not to be scattered as

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their fathers had been, but to be united as their fathers never were. The miraculous change of language which had broken up and separated *that* association, was now followed by another miraculous change of language which should render *this* association the beginning of a permanent fellowship. Christ had died. The sacrifice for sin had been offered. Men were reconciled to God. The gospel was preached. And now the Spirit of God, the Spirit of light and life, of love, and purity, and power came down from heaven. He taught the apostles to preach, gave Peter and the rest tongues to speak, and thoughts, new, wonderful, glorious thoughts, to find utterance in their tongues. Doubtless, he also came over the assembly, drawing the people's attention to the message they heard, and opening their hearts to receive it. This gave to the Pentecostal gathering a new character, made it a normal gathering, a glorious precedent and pattern for all time to come. Men were then gathered round Christ's cross as convicted sinners, weeping penitents, believing, praying souls, and through the cross, God sent them pardon and peace, the assurance of his love and the hope of heaven. And men were then also gathered round Christ's throne, as willing subjects, loyal, hearty, devoted subjects, and from that throne came forth spiritual law, and they who received it were, by the gracious lawgiver, inclined in heart to keep it. The natural man became a spiritual man. Children of Adam became children of God. The devil who had entered into them was cast out, and now the spirit entered in. They themselves became the temple of the Holy Ghost, a temple whose top should, indeed, reach to heaven, and stand for ever a monument of the divine Builder's glory, the beauty and joy of the universe. The principles of the first gathering were now reversed.

1. Instead of pride lifting up the men of Pentecost to make to themselves a name, humility laid them low in the dust, and they thought of no name but his who saved them. The prophecy received a fulfilment. "The day of the Lord of hosts shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty, and upon every one that is lifted up, and he shall be brought low, and upon all the cedars of Lebanon that are high and lifted up, and upon all the oaks of Bashan, and upon all the high mountains, and upon all the hills that are lifted up, and upon every high tower, and upon every fenced wall, and the loftiness of men shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be made low, and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day." The genius of Babel was *pride*—that of Pentecost, *humility*.

2. Instead of the lust of dominion stimulating men to overide the nationalities of nature, to seek the foundation of one vast secular empire, and to overshadow the earth with a central monarchy, placed in the hands of a mortal, the Spirit, in the new religion which he developed, taught sentiments of true liberty, fraternity, and equality. Not the vaunted names, but the genuine things. These were to inspire men's souls, leading them to recognize as the rights of others, the privileges they claimed themselves, to respect the distinctions of race, to hold sacred the boundary marks of nations, and to think of no universal monarchy in this world, but that of him who wears on his vesture, and his thigh, a name written, "King of kings, and Lord of lords." The genius of Babel was selfish ambition—that of Pentecost, brotherly love.

3. Superstition and idolatry, the spirit then came to cast out from men's souls—not only in their grosser forms, but in their subtle elements, and to create in men just views of the Deity; to inspire them with sentiments of admiration, reverence and love, according to the Christian law of divine service. "God is a spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." The genius of Babel was superstition—that of Pentecost, spiritual piety. The contrast is plain. The genius of the Pentecostal day was thoroughly anti-Babel. The facts connected with that *old* gathering were exponents of principles which were rampant in man's fallen nature, which the waters of the flood could not overwhelm. The Spirit of God subdued and extirpated them in this *new* gathering, and introduced in their room the three antagonist principles, humility instead of pride, love instead of selfishness, piety instead of superstition. Here is the triple bond of the

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new great gathering of souls—the gathering of men into the fold of salvation, the gathering of men into holy fellowship, the gathering which began at Pentecost, and has gone on ever since—a gathering which hell cannot scatter, and which death cannot dissolve. It is a gathering of the spirits of men into one glorious procession, along the highway of holiness, to the Jerusalem above, so that the portion of the host already round the throne, is one with the residue now approaching the black steps beneath death's portico. It is the gathering of the holy catholic church—not in any narrow sectarian sense, but in the broad, glorious, scriptural sense of the whole church of the first born, whose names are written in heaven. The day of Pentecost was a great day in the history of time. Then a new kingdom, the opposite of the Babel one, appeared. Then the new Jerusalem descended out of heaven from God, like a bride adorned for her husband! a queenly bride in gold of ophir—not that she should reign over the world—not that a fifth monarchy should be set up, such as fanatics have dreamt of at Rome and elsewhere—not that the saints should beat down earthly thrones, or the Pope trample upon crowns; but that, while secular governments, and the prerogatives of crowns are left untouched, she should assert, and at the same time, obey and honour the supreme authority of him who is her own Lord, and the King of all mankind.

CHRIST'S kingdom is not of this world: his gathering of a people to himself proceeds on different principles, and is conducted in a different spirit from that of Nimrod or any other conqueror. It is stated that when Napoleon was in exile in the isle of St. Helena, he was one day conversing on the history of Christianity, and remarked, how different was the method which Christ adopted in forming his kingdom, from the method which he and Alexander, and other great warriors had employed in forming theirs. No wonder Napoleon was struck with the contrast; as he paced the shores of his prison isle at eventide, he would behold in the tumultuous waves breaking at his feet, the image of the one—and in the evening star, so gentle and serene, the image of the other, Napoleon, and such as he, studied military tactics and worldly policy, and Jesus Christ went about doing good. Napoleon led forth hosts, armed with sword and gun, spear and shield—and Jesus gathered twelve humble men together, bidding them go and preach. Napoleon rushed to the field and demolished his foes—Jesus Christ died on a cross, and thus subdued death. Napoleon was enthroned in a palace, with warriors and statesmen around him—Jesus Christ took his seat at the right hand of God. Napoleon established a kingdom by force—Jesus Christ established his by truth, and love, and the descent of the Spirit from on high. How different the scene in the temple on the day of Pentecost, and that in Notre Dame, when the proud Napoleon, amidst the pomp of French chivalry, placed the crown on his own head. How different the empires, in history as well as character. The one broken up, and since shattered by revolutions, the other a kingdom that cannot be moved.

The Pentecostal church gathering, then, stands out in contrast with the other normal gathering, we first noticed, with its numerous affiliated instances.

This gathering too is related to some others. They are preparations or consequences.

The holy gatherings in Judea, when the people came up at Passover, Pentecost and the Feast of Tabernacles—when they came from Dan and Beersheba, from the coasts about Tyre, and from the other side Jordan; when with happy faces and joyful tongues they came over the mountains that stood round about Jerusalem, and like doves flocking to their windows entered through the gates into the city. These gatherings at once festive and holy, (what a contrast to the Olympic games and Roman festivals,) were preparing the way for, were partly typical of the great ingathering of souls to Christ on the Day of Pentecost. What made them so different from other great assemblages in the ancient world, was the divinity of that religion with which they were connected, the same in principle with the Christian religion.

And all the holy gatherings of the Christian world since Pentecost, all

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those which may be regarded as holy, have been produced by the Spirit of truth and love which descended then. All meetings of believers around the Lord's table to celebrate that never to be forgotten day when Christ our passover was slain ; all assemblings for fraternal fellowship.

"When streams of love from Christ the spring,
Descend to every soul.

And heavenly peace with balmy wing
Shades and bedews the whole."

All crowds of Christian souls in spacious edifices, or the open air, drawn together for worship, spiritual worship, the sublimest act that earth can ever witness ; the voice of prayer going up to heaven like incense, while thousands of devout hearts mingle with it their silent responses ; the music of praise swelling out harmoniously from myriads of lips, concentrated within the walls of some hallowed structure, or—"within no walls confined"—spreading forth and flowing away in liberty over hill and dale. All conventions for Christian purposes, for missions and Bible distribution, for spreading the gospel at home and abroad, for those objects which are so often explained, illustrated, and pleaded for, within this Hall sacred to philanthropy. All these gatherings, when the best and purest affections are awakened, we cannot fail to recognize as the fruits of Pentecost. And to these we may add others : Alliance Conferences, Peace and Anti-slavery Conventions, Temperance Demonstrations, such things must have been unknown, but for the Christian revelation. Whatever there is pure and good in them must be ascribed to the religion which was proclaimed at Pentecost. And as to other societies for laudable objects, the influence of Pentecost may be recognized in them : for example, how could such an Association as the present have been formed, and such an assembly as we meet to-night convened, with the thoughts and feelings which now inspire your minds and hearts, if the gospel had not been sent down from heaven, and conveyed to Britain ? Instead of sitting to hear with candour and sympathy a Christian brother, while he stirs up your mind by way of remembrance, you might have been seated on the benches of a Roman Amphitheatre, gloating with blood thirsty delight over the agonies of a dying gladiator. No language can describe what *you* owe to Christianity. And further gatherings, not religious, are powerfully affected by what occurred at Pentecost. The spirit which pervades certain modern assemblages, so different from, so incomparably better than, the spirit which animated ancient ones, must be ascribed to the gospel. Why the Exhibition itself is a case in point. Besides the manifold appellations such as "the Crystal Palace," "the School of Art," "the Hall of Industry," "the Temple of Peace," "the Conservatory of the World's Wealth," "the Hive of Nations," it claims justly another name, "a Monument of Christianity." Art could not have produced it, science could not have produced it, no Fox and Henderson could have reared it, no Paxton planned it, no Prince Albert suggested and patronized it, but for Christianity. Only Christianity could have created the civilization of which it is the exponent, could have inspired the feelings out of which it sprung. Under the paganism of Greece, Rome, or Hindostan, or any other ancient country, which was and is essentially narrow and prejudiced, leading its votaries to think all barbarians except themselves, an invitation to the whole world to come and bring the fruits of their industry together—a welcome expressed on terms of equality, in the spirit of real brotherhood—a cordial embrace given to universal man, all this had been impossible, perfectly impossible. Only Christianity could have taught the sentiment expressed by our gracious Queen, "that by God's blessing this undertaking may conduce to the welfare of her people, and to the common interests of the human race, by encouraging the arts of peace and industry, strengthening the bonds of union among the nations of the earth, and promoting a friendly and honourable rivalry in the useful exercise of those faculties which have been conferred by a beneficent providence for the good and happiness of mankind." Only Christianity could have inspired the prayer in which we joined on the long to be remembered first of May :—

"Now, O Lord, we beseech thee to bless the work which thou hast enabled us to begin, and to regard, with thy favour, our present purpose in uniting together in the bonds of peace and concord the different nations of the earth, for of thee, O Lord, and not of the preparations of man it cometh that violence is not heard in our land, nor contentions nor violence within our borders. It is of thee, O Lord, that nation does not lift up sword against nation, nor learn war any more. It is of thee that peace is within our walls, plenteousness within our palaces, and man goeth forth in safety, and that knowledge is increased throughout the world; therefore, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name be all the praise. While we survey the works of art and industry around us, let not our hearts be lifted up that we forget the Lord our God, or that it is not of our own power, or of the might of our hands that we have gotten us this wealth. Teach us to remember that this store which we have prepared is all thine own, in thine hands it is to make great, and to give strength and honour. We thank thee, we praise thee, we entreat thee, to overrule this assembly of many nations, that it may tend to the advancement of thy glory, to the increase of our prosperity, and to the promotion of peace and good will among the different races of mankind."

Unquestionably Christianity prepared for the gathering of 1851, rendered it possible, and stamps on it its most illustrious character. Whatever is really good in it may be traced to Pentecost, while whatever may attach to it of moral evil is the result of man's depravity, which we have seen so early developed. And future great gatherings in the world Christianity is destined to purify and exalt. "The mountain of the Lord's house is to be established on the top of the mountains, and all nations shall flow unto it." Christianity is to pervade society more fully than it has ever done, to convert society, to sanctify society, to take out of human associations such evil as has long been in them, and to implant such good as was once perfectly unknown; to exorcise the Babel spirit, and to enthronize the Pentecostal; to create sights "such as earth never saw, such as heaven stoops down to see." We have thus glanced at the normal gathering of Pentecost, and at its relation to other gatherings, and placed it and them in contrast with the Babel ones. All the great gatherings of the world assimilate, more or less, to that at Babel, or that on the Day of Pentecost. According as they are animated by pride or humility, selfishness or benevolence, superstition or spiritual piety, they belong to one or the other. The moral character of great assemblages is not always read aright by us; we are liable to think better or worse than we ought of particular instances, but there is one above, who judges of them in righteous judgment, and his sentence shall come forth plainly hereafter. This brings us to look for a moment

III. At the last great gathering, in the light in which every other should be regarded. All who have expired since Abel went down to the grave; all the young and hoary headed who died before the flood; all the millions swallowed up by that tremendous inundation; all who perished in Sodom and Gomorrah; all who fell in the wilderness, all the cities and countries full of mortals, we read of in the Bible; all the huge armies and crowds of men, and women, and children, that we are told of in secular history; all the people who now flock to our metropolis, and all they leave behind in other lands; all unborn generations; all that tide of existence which, as time rolls on, broadens and deepens in its flow, so as to alarm political economists with the fear of a human inundation; all souls of every age, and size, and sort, forming a concourse such as overwhelms us with astonishment when we think of it; all these are to stand together before God's throne at the last day. You and I, every one of us will be included in the great throng. Society will then be resolved into its elements; multitudes into individuals; "one by one" men will come before God, and meet him face to face, each realizing to its full extent his own personal responsibility. In the awful light which will then burn around the judgment throne, the characters of all great gatherings will be correctly read. Illumination will be shed upon the whole perspective of the world's past history. All events will be seen falling into their proper places; the moral elements of everything will be evolved; the true and the

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false ; the right and the wrong will be justly estimated ; the principles which prevailed at Babel will be seen plainly enough to have come from beneath ; the principles developed at Pentecost from above. Moral actions will be traced to their source in motives. They will be found to stand on them, as their base, to spring out of them as their root. Actions, which were doubtful, dark, contradictory, in the estimation of men, will reveal their true nature, under the analysis of the divine eye, and unfold their origin either in humility, love, and religion, or pride, selfishness, and superstition. Character will be estimated accordingly. However difficult it may be for us to determine on which side the great dividing line of the moral universe, an individual is to be placed, no such difficulty will be felt by the Judge. The character of every association will, by implication at least, be declared, inasmuch as the character of each individual who helped to form them will receive its award. It will be seen how far the assemblage at the Exhibition has been gathered on benevolent Christian principles, and how far otherwise. It will then be seen with what views and feelings you have formed this society, how you have conducted yourselves in relation to it, what use you have made of its advantages, and what good or evil you have been doing to others, through the intercourse with them, to which it has given rise. From associations, vicious and wicked, in which good men may have been involved, and to get out of which their life has been a struggle, they shall then be separated ; while from associations of another character the worthless and vile shall be cut off for ever. "They shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend them, which do iniquity, and shall cast them into a furnace of fire." It will give none of you any pain, then, to reflect upon associations in which you have been united, with a view to the interests of commerce, art, and literature, provided the means have been unexceptionable ; since objects of this order are consistent, with the constitution of our nature, the laws of providence, and the principles of religion. But it will give you pain, racking pain, to reflect upon associations for indulgence in sinful pleasure, upon gatherings like the accursed banquet of Belshazzar, when God's finger wrote upon the wall the doom of the impious reveller. Gatherings there are, too much like that in this great city, in reference to which you will wish at the last day that you had said, if you are not saying it, "My soul come not thou into their secret, unto their assembly ; mine honour, be not thou united." It will also give you pain, great pain, to remember your association with any gathering, however good, in its general object, if such personal association with it has proceeded from the Babel principles of pride, selfishness, or superstition. But, on the other hand, it will give you a pleasure with which a stranger intermeddleth not, to remember at that day, "hours of prayer," and hours of spiritual converse, and hours of earnest religious reading, spent in this association ; and to remember other hours of like spirit and purpose spent elsewhere. At the last gathering, then, all former ones will be reviewed and justly estimated. Our connection with them judicially determined, and the result of the whole revealed. And as anticipations of the last day should influence us in everything, they ought powerfully to influence us in our judgments upon human associations of every kind, ecclesiastical, civic, social, festive, and our conduct in relation to them. "How will they look then ? How shall we feel about them then ?

And further, this great fact will, in "*that day*," be manifest enough, that amidst all the visible gatherings which have been going on from the beginning, there has been the progress of invisible gatherings. The gathering of men on the one hand into captive crowds under the tyrannical leadership of the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the hearts of the children of disobedience ; the gathering of men on the other hand, into a glorious army of redeemed spirits, under the captain of salvation. The one gathering formed and kept together by the world, the flesh, and the devil ; the other commenced and preserved by the spirit and truth of God. The one gathering destined to immortal life ; the other, to eternal death. It will be seen that the visible were subordinate to the invisible, and deserved their chief importance from their influence in reference to the latter. *These*

will appear in boldest prominence throughout the whole period of the past. These two vast processions, under their respective leaders—Satan the chief slave-master, and Christ the Lord of the free—will cover the picture of history, as they are seen marching along the highways of time. The character and number of each, and the vast difference between them will then be made manifest. Their destiny will also be made manifest. The redeemed under Christ, pardoned through his blood, and regenerated by his Spirit, will be led by their glorious Saviour through the gates into the city of the Great King, while all the rest, the slaves of falsehood, lust, and ungodliness, shall go to their own place. The universal gathering will then divide; and two visible gatherings will be formed never to be confounded or mistaken any more.

In conclusion. Let me entreat each young man present, to inquire within which of the two great moral gatherings he is included. In anticipation of the final gathering together before God, let this question be entertained. It is the question of questions. Everything depends on it. 'Tis life and more than life to be gathered unto Christ. 'Tis death and more than death to remain under the tyranny of the devil.

Perhaps you have chosen the service which is perfect freedom. Thanks be to God for your past emancipation, your present loving obedience, your future gracious reward! Stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made you free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage. But perhaps some of you are now in the very act of struggling for your spiritual liberty. You try to get rid of the entanglements around you, to burst away for old associations and habits, to separate yourself from the gathering of the ungodly, to find a place in the congregation of the saints. I understand there is in the Exhibition, a curious work of art, representing a huge web woven around a human being, while an enormous spider is seen watching the struggles of the captive mortal. Whatever was the design of the artist, we may take the representation as symbolical of your present state. Satan has thrown his web around you, and like a vampyre watches your every movement, while he thirsts for your blood. But persevere. Through faith and prayer you shall succeed. Believe in Christ. "Behold the Lamb of God who taketh away the sins of the world." Ask for the renewing of the Holy Ghost. A mightier spirit than he who entrails shall give deliverance. He will tear the devil's web, as a man may break threads of gossamer, and set your panting spirit free.

The following Nos. of the Penny Pulpit contain Sermons delivered at Exeter Hall.

- 1,700, The Great Exhibition, by the Rev. T. Binney.
- 1,701, The Gift of God, by the Hon. and Rev. B. W. Noel, M.A.
- 1,705, The Prodigal's Return, by the Rev. W. Brock.
- 1,706, The City of Refuge, by the Rev. J. Beaumont, M.D.
- 1,710, The Truth, by the Rev. J. Aldis.
- 1,711, Wisdom's Invitation, by the Rev. G. Smith.
- 1,713, Looking to Christ, by the Rev. J. Hamilton, D.D.
- 1,714, Why will ye die? by the Rev. J. Stoughton.
- 1,717, The Gospel, by the Rev. Luke Tyerman.
- 1,718, The Testimonies of God, by the Rev. T. Archer, D.D.
- 1,720—21, The Book for all Nations, and all Times, by the Rev. J. C. Miller.
- 1,724, Salvation, by the Rev. G. Clayton.
- 1,725, The difficulties of speculative Inquiry, by the Rev. J. H. Hinton, A.M.
- 1,727, The Goodness and Love of God, by the Hon. & Rev. B. W. Noel, M.A.
- 1,728, The Final Judgment, by the Rev. John Burnet.
- 1,729, The Desire of all Nations, by the Rev. H. Cooke, D.D.
- 1,733, Witnessing to the Truth, by the Rev. C. Stovel.
- 1,735, Things Temporal, by the Rev. S. Martin.
- 1,738, The Hope of the Believer, by the Rev. W. Brock.
- 1,739, The Power of Faith and Prayer, by the Rev. W. Chalmers.
- 1,741-42, The Catholicity of the Gospel, by the Rev. J. Dixon, D.D.
- 1,743, The Saviour Knocking at the Door, by the Rev. James Hamilton, D.D.
- 1,744, The Righteousness of God, by the Rev. J. Beaumont, M.D.
- 1,750, The Mystery of Life, by the Rev. G. Smith.
- 1,751, The Brazen Serpent, by the Rev. W. Chalmers.
- 1,752, The Heirs of God, by the Rev. T. Binney.

(To be continued.)

THE MYSTERY OF LIFE.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JULY 13, 1851,

BY THE REV. GEORGE SMITH,

AT EXETER HALL.

"Jesus answered him, saying, It is written, that man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God."—Luke iv. 4.

It must be felt, and acknowledged, on all hands, that these are very remarkable words. If we had heard them to-day for the first time, or had read them this morning in some book, that for the first time had been put into our hands as possessing some claim to our attention, we should conclude without any hesitation that there was something very striking, original, and suggestive in the words themselves; and we should naturally enough be led to inquire, What do they mean? For what purpose were they written, and to what point are they directed? Do they not appear to involve a fallacy, for is it not a generally received, and undoubted truth, that bread is the staff of life? That man can live upon it, that life may be supported by it for a long time; then why is it here written that "man shall not live by bread alone?"

The words which appear thus remarkable in themselves, and to bear little or no agreement with generally received opinion, are rendered additionally striking by all the circumstances under which they are brought before us. They are found written in a book which bears upon it in the evidence of fulfilled prophecy and accomplished miracle, blended with a remarkable and exquisite adaptation to the wants and woes of the human heart, a proof of its divine origin; showing that the volume in which this language is found is one that was written with the approbation of him who knows the human heart, and is intimately acquainted with the dependent condition and need of man. It is not found in a work of mere political economy, put forth by persons who talk about the law of production and supply, the limitations of population and the means of support, with a confidence and undoubting assurance, not always justified by the results, as there is often involved in their reasonings, and conclusions, an amount of error of which they are not at all aware. No! these words were recorded in a book written at the command of him who is the Father of the human family, who has "made of one blood all the nations of men for to dwell upon the face of the earth; and "Who opens his hand and supplies the wants of every living thing;"—he himself has declared, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God."

And then, the words are invested with peculiar interest to us, because they were quoted by the Saviour, and that in a very authoritative and striking way; they are a quotation, made, not like the quotations which men often make, taking out, perhaps, from the book of God some mere fragment of truth, to buttress up some old exploded fallacy in the citadel of error. We oftentimes quote Scripture very erroneously, not in harmony with the mind, the will, and the Spirit of God; but he was the wise and great teacher who came from heaven, the divinely acknowledged and incarnate Son of God, who lay in the bosom of the Father, and who perfectly understood his holy mind and will; he it was who was sent for the salvation and instruction of mankind who thus quoted from the Old Testament writings and put the authority of the Founder of the new economy side by side with that of the legislator of a former dispensation; the authority of Jesus Christ by the authority of Moses, with a view to demonstrate the fact, that "man shall not live by bread alone."

And yet, further, these words appear to have a strong claim upon your attention from the fact, that they were employed by our Lord in controversy; in controversy not with earth, but with hell, not with man but with a demon, not with any of the princes of this world, but in controversy with "the prince of the power of the air." Our Lord, when he employed these words, as you are aware, was under a strong and affecting temptation. He had been baptized by John at the Jordan, and had retired to qualify himself for the full discharge of his important work. He had fasted forty days and forty nights in the wilderness, surrounded by wild beasts of the desert, where "angels came and ministered unto him." It was every way desirable that he should be tempted in all respects like his brethren, that he might sympathise with the entire human family. And so when the period of

fasting had ended he hungered, and when he felt the pains of hunger devouring his frame, and wasting, as it were, his vital powers, just at that moment there fell upon him a sore temptation—the devil came to him and presented to him a series of well constructed and well adapted temptations, intending to cause him to diverge from the path of duty, and to lead him to the commission of evil. The first temptation he presented was in this form. “If thou be the Son of God”—or as it would be more correctly rendered—“If thou be a Son of God,” for the devil did not perhaps exactly know the character of Christ, and was not altogether aware of the fact, that he was the incarnate one, that wonderful being who as “the seed of the woman,” had been predestined to “bruise the serpent’s head;” and when he came to him, probably with a view to ascertain the fact, and with a view to defeat his mission in the very commencement of his work he said, “If thou be Son of God command these stones”—of the dessert—“to be made bread;” and Jesus answered him, saying, “It is written, man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.”

The words thus brought before you, and to which I would direct your attention, are capable of explanation, and indeed want some little light thrown upon them. They are capable too of application, for they appear to involve a great and important principle of enduring and unchanging value; and it will therefore be my object this morning, first of all to offer some remarks explanatory of this saying; and, in the second place, to apply the sentiment it contains, to the correction of certain prevalent forms of error, both of opinion and practice amongst men. In directing your attention then, to these words, I purpose

I. TO OFFER SOME REMARKS EXPLANATORY OF THIS SAYING.

If there be darkness and ambiguity in the phraseology; if there be aught of mystery or obscurity gathering around the sentiment, we must seek to cast light upon it, and make it clear and plain by certain considerations which will readily occur to your minds. I purpose to ascertain the precise meaning of these words as they were used by the prophet. They fell originally from the lips of Moses, when surrounded by the assembled multitude of Israel. It was an affecting scene; he was an old man, and was going the way of all the earth; but though far advanced in life, his eye was not dim, and his natural strength was not abated. He had it in his heart to go over Jordan with the people to take possession of the promised land, but he had offended God through their folly, and, therefore, he was not allowed to go over with them; that work was devolved upon Joshua. He stood up, however, in the midst of the people with the princes, the nobles, the rulers, and the heads of the families and the tribes of Israel around him; and he called upon them to remember all the way by which the Lord had led them. With his dying breath he eulogised the God of Israel, and blessed the Israel of God, while calling to the remembrance of the people, the path by which he had led them during the space of forty years in the wilderness. Thus we hear him saying, “And thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no. And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live.” Deuteronomy viii. 2, 3. Now in these words there is an obvious and direct reference to the falling of the manna, by which God supported the people in the desert. Usually man is supported by food springing out of the ground; but in that case they were supported by food which came down from heaven. Usually he is supported by what might be called the food of man, but here they were supported by that which was termed “angel’s food.” You are doubtless familiar with all the circumstances of that history. When the people had been led forth from Egypt by the appointed way, going up to take possession of the promised land, they began to find fault with God, and to murmur against Moses, fearing that they should die with hunger; and so bitter were their feelings that they asked there were no graves in Egypt, that Moses must lead them forth to die in the wilderness. The Lord heard their murmuring, and while displeased with their conduct had compassion on them: “It came to pass that at evening quail came up and covered the camp: and in the morning the dew lay round about the host.” On the dew the manna fell. A second layer of dew covered it, and when this was evaporated by the sun, the manna appeared. It was a

small seed, beautiful in form and colour, like the coriander seed, or hoar frost; and "the taste of it was like wafers made with honey." Each morning the people went out and gathered it, every child, every man, every woman, every family, and every tribe—"they did all eat the same spiritual meat;" and they were supported by it for a period of forty years. This was every way marvellous. A multitude amounting to nearly three millions were thus supported by food that fell nightly, from the clouds, day after day, week after week, month after month, and year after year! This manna was intended to be a type of spiritual things. It was designed to prefigure and illustrate the work of Christ. "Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness," said he, "and are dead, but he that eateth me, even he shall live by me;" and in the visions of the Apocalypse the Saviour said to John, "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna." The manna that was gathered up and was placed in the Ark of the Covenant, in the golden pot, according to the divine command, was at once a type of spiritual food, and an illustration of the good providence of God that had watched over his people. Men are usually fed from earth, but here they had food from heaven. God supernaturally nourished and supported them, says the prophet, that the people might know that "man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live."

It will help us to understand the meaning of the language of the text, Secondly, if we advert to the exact design for which these words were employed by the Saviour. I am not about to enter into the whole subject of our Lord's temptation; it would be too wide and discursive, and a too attractive field thoroughly to examine in the portion of time allotted for the particular exercise of this morning. I am only, therefore, about to allude to the temptation, for the purpose of affirming that it was real, that it was a veritable thing, that it was not a dream, a delusion, a phantasm. All the narrative bears about it the idea of a reality. There is a real dessert, the very dessert, probably, in which Moses and Elijah had fasted in ancient times. There is a real Saviour, with a body like our own, of flesh and blood; a real Redeemer standing before the temptation; and in order to have the entire harmony of the narrative, the perfect outline of the scene, are we not to recognize the real agency of Satan as the tempter—as the opponent of God, of man, and of Christ? Whether he came to the Saviour like an angel of light, fallen from heaven, or whether he came in the form of a traveller across the desert, or whether he came in the way of some strong supernatural power presenting itself to the mind—the temptation was real. And when the tempter came to him, he said, "If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread;" you will see how well adapted the temptation was; it appealed to the sensation of hunger; and there is nothing stronger, nothing more painful; nothing that will, if unrelieved, produce so large an amount of wretchedness. It was under these circumstances, when our Lord hungered after he had fasted forty days, that the tempter came to him and said, "Surely you can relieve yourself if you hunger, if you be the Son of God, by turning these stones into bread." And who can doubt but he could have done it; he who shortly afterwards, at the marriage festival in Cana of Galilee, turned the water into wine. He could as readily have changed those stones into bread. But he did it not. It was an appeal to our Lord to doubt the providence of heaven, to doubt the care of his heavenly Father, who had been watchful over him hitherto, and had said, "Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." It was a temptation to induce Christ to use unjustifiable means in order to deliver himself from the pressure of a passing difficulty; it was a temptation for him to tempt the Lord his God. But our Lord did not yield to it. He had miraculous power; but, mark you, he seldom, if ever, employed it for his own advantage; he usually employed it for the benefit of others. He had power to heal the sick, to raise the dead, to cast out devils, and to give consolation to the troubled soul. The loaves of bread multiplied beneath his touch for the relief of the fainting multitude; but he was not prepared to employ miraculous power in order to support himself. And, then, the devil had no right to demand this of him. What was it to him whether Christ was the Son of God or not? What had he to do with it? What right had "the prince of the power of the air" to demand the character of the Saviour! What right had he to tempt the Son of the blessed? Clearly he had no right whatever. It was a demonstration of Satanic malevolence, impudence, and wickedness; but the Saviour "durst not bring against him a railing accu-

sation," but in the Spirit of the angel who said, "the Lord rebuke thee Satan," merely replied, "it is written, that man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God." It was as if he had said, 'for forty days and forty nights I have lived without bread, and during that period my body has been supported by miracle, and now that the sensation of hunger has come back upon me, I rely on him who supported my frame before, to support me still; though I am hungry and thirsty, yet he has a thousand ways by which my life and being may be supported. I believe in God, I believe in my Father, and he hath himself declared that he loveth me. I dare not do anything that would imply a doubt on his providence, for it is written, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God."

We shall further understand the meaning of the text, by adverting to those truths of general interest which appear to be involved in this saying. It was originally, as we have seen, uttered by Moses, and afterwards quoted by our Lord. The saying is recorded in the Old Testament Scriptures, and it is recorded in the New Testament also, and more than once; and must therefore have some great and general meaning belonging to it. It is adapted to teach us, I think, some important and interesting truths. What is the nature of them? They appear to be of this order. Life is valuable, and ought to be preserved. Man is to live; nothing can to be compared with life; wealth, honour, reputation, dignity, position, rank—what is all that compared with life? "A living dog is better than a dead lion." Life is an invaluable boon: it is the day of grace; the day of opportunity; the day of responsibility. We have life, and that life is valuable and ought to be preserved. All life is valuable. Vegetable life; above that animal life; above that rational life; beyond that immortal life. The thing we call life, which is confined to three score years and ten, and like an April day is made up of sunshine and of shower—that life is very valuable; and we are responsible for it. It is an awful thing to live; to live aright; to live well. A very affecting thing that! We are to live to God, who giveth us life. He is the Great Author of life, "in whom we live, and move, and have our being." We ought carefully to preserve life. You watch over the life of your child: you watch over the life of your friend. Watch your own life. Take care of it. Do not allow temptations to lead you into any course of crime that would undermine your health, and shorten, and terminate your life. Men ought to regard life as a great and invaluable gift. "Skin upon skin, yet all that a man hath will he give for his life." Life is valuable and ought to be preserved. Will you then permit me to say that it is worth while now and then to pause and consider how much of life is spent, to ask what is life? Why is it given me? Whither am I tending? What belongs to life, and what will follow when the life of time becomes extinguished by the hand of death.

Then we are taught further by these representations that life is sustained by the use of appointed means, and not by miracle. "He giveth us all things richly to enjoy." We are not to expect life to be sustained by miracle. Every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be sanctified by the word of God and prayer. What a wonderful arrangement there is in the providence of God for the interests of men. "Doth God take care of them? Doth he watch over the fowls of the air, and the finny tribes that pass through the pathway of the mighty deep? Yes, God takes care of them; and he has never left the world without a witness of his goodness, in that he has sent fruitful seasons, filling your hearts with joy and gladness.

Then we are taught that life is dependant upon the great power of God. We are apt to attribute life and death, sickness and health to secondary causes, and to overlook the Great Author of everything. When a man is sick, we attribute it to a change of the weather, to a cold, or to some other outward influence, or to a combination of them. If the man is restored to health, we attribute his restoration to the skill of the physician, to his strong constitution, or to some other secondary cause. But while these things are, of course, not to be overlooked, it ought never to be forgotten that God is the Great Arbiter of human destiny, and that our times are in his hands; that we live upon his bounty; that he has provided the means for the formation and sustentation of life—and that without him nothing is wise, nothing is holy, nothing is strong.

Yet once more, we are taught by this representation that God has a variety of means by which he can support life. The volitions of the divine mind, the power of the divine arm, the resources of the divine wisdom, are infinitely

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above our grasp. If we want to accomplish any object, we can just try one or two plans, and then if we fail with them, we can do nothing more, but must give up the object in despair. It is not so with God. He has a variety of means by which he can support life. He can support life by miracle. Though we do not live under a dispensation of miracles, yet we believe in the immeasurable power of God; and does he not often watch over life in a very peculiar and remarkable way. Look at that young man, Daniel, who is cast into the lions den; he is on the very verge of destruction; but God sends his angel and shuts the lions mouths, and the youth is preserved. Look also at those three young men passing through the burning fiery furnace; they are in great danger of perishing; but there is one with them in form like unto the Son of God, and they live and pass unhurt through the fire; the lambent flame forgets its power to burn, for God watches over and takes care of their lives.

Life, too, is oftentimes preserved providentially in a very remarkable way. There is Paul in the ship; it is overtaken in a storm; and every man on board expects nothing but a watery grave; but there stands by the Apostle in the darkness of the night an angel who declares to him that each person on board shall be preserved because God wills it. There is a child cast out, its mother can no longer watch over him; parental affection can no longer protect him; he is committed to a little fragile ark of bulrushes, and is cast into the waters of the mighty Nile. The monsters of the deep are ready to devour it, but, lo! the providence of God directs the footsteps of Pharaoh's daughter to the very spirit where the babe lies. She looks at the little one; it weeps; her womanly heart is touched; she takes it up and presses it to her own bosom—that mysterious being who is to become the occasion of bringing death into the dwelling of every Egyptian. And this power of God in his providential arrangements is remarkably employed in preserving life, by granting efficient supplies where they appear to fail. There is a prophet without food, and the ravens are commissioned to bring him bread and flesh in the morning, and bread and flesh in the evening, and he lives by the brook Cherith; but the brook is dried up, and the prophet is left in danger of perishing with thirst. But God had a great work for him to do, and that life of his, therefore, must be preserved. He is commanded to go to the city of Zarephath, and as he comes to the gate of the city, he finds a widow woman coming out to collect a little handful of fuel to cook the frail meal for herself and her child, that they may eat and then lay down and die. But the barrel of meal is not permitted to waste, nor the cruse of oil to diminish till the day that the famine terminates, and God sends rain and food upon the earth; "that men might know that they shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God."

Having thus endeavoured to expound the language of the text to you, by showing its meaning in the original use, by intimating what our Lord especially designed by it when he employed it, and illustrating its general principles—let me now for a short time, secondly—

II. APPLY THE SENTIMENT CONTAINED IN THE TEXT, WITH A VIEW TO THE CORRECTION OF CERTAIN PREVALENT FORMS OF ERROR, BOTH OF OPINION AND PRACTICE, WHICH EXIST AMONGST MEN.

There are many things that people are doing every day in direct violation of the sentiment contained in the text. You would not like to stand up in this assembly and say, that is not true, that is a fallacy; you would not like to use this language, but some of you are, perhaps, acting as though you believed it to be untrue. Well, let us look at the text, and see if the sentiment it contains is adapted to correct any of the errors that prevail among men. And, first, I would observe, that it censures the loose opinions of those who hope to live upon pleasure. Look around the world and you will find a number of weak, foolish, frivolous people who expend life without one noble object in view, they are living vainly and absurdly, and are asking, "who will show us any good?" Come from whence it may, from the heaven above or from the earth beneath, they are thoroughly indifferent; some novelty, some new form of excitement, or some new combination of a worn out pleasure. They live for pleasure; the card table, the ball room, the place of guilty riot, the scene of ungodly amusement, is attractive to them. The last new novel, the last new song, the last newly-invented pleasure is the thing for which they pant, and after which they continually aspire; as though they could live upon pleasure. Christ says, men are to live upon *bread*. There is a very serious character about life. Men cannot live upon pleasure; it cannot satisfy. Pleasure may be the adamant of

life; there may be gratification in connection with the highest tastes, pleasures, and sensibilities of life, but men are to *live* for a higher, for a nobler object. It may be that you have sometimes felt it to be a solemn thing to die! Ah! it is a solemn thing to live! You must live for a high and noble purpose. You cannot live upon pleasure. Change the form of it as you may, and add to it as you please. Deck a man with gold, adorn the gold with diamonds, and put into his hand all the possessions of an earthly kingdom. They are not enough to render him happy. No modification of earthly good, can satisfy the cravings of an immortal mind. The man who lives upon pleasure is dead while he lives. Look at him, he is disappointed, mocked, insulted. It is as if you were to invite a hungry man to a painted banquet; there is the form of food, but it cannot minister to his support—there is nothing upon which a man can live; or perhaps, to change the figure, it is like inviting a man to partake of solid food that would nourish his frame and increase his strength; but instead of this you offer him a few light frothy luxuries that would not contribute to a proper and permanent nutriment. I say again, man cannot live upon pleasure. He can live upon bread; "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work." "I have meat to eat," said the Redeemer, "that the world knoweth not of." We may, say, then, with great seriousness, with great earnestness, and with great truthfulness to all, and especially to you, young men, you cannot enjoy life in mere mirth or folly; life is a thing which involves a great deal of responsibility; it is not to be frittered away in wit or indifference; it is to be fitted to a high and noble purpose. Better, far better, for you if you had never been born, than to have lived and to have neglected the great purpose of life. It is written, that man should *live* to promote God's glory; "for whether we live, we live to the Lord, and whether we die, we die to the Lord; whether, therefore, we live or die, we are the Lord's."

I employ the sentiment of the text secondly, for the correction of another form of error, and that of a totally different kind. We think these words condemn the conduct of the men that toil *only* for bread. And is not that the character of a large number of people? There is a dignity about labour. There is an honour stamped upon it: "My father worketh hitherto," said Christ, "and I work." I have no kind of sympathy, my brethren, whatever with that cry which is now and then raised against labour. I have no kind of belief in the statements that are made about the "curse" of labour! Labour is *not* a curse; it is a blessing! Uncompensated toil is a curse. *Toil* that is undue is a malady; but labour, moderate labour, that is within the reach of the mind, the hand, or the strength of man—labour properly compensated, suitably repaid—so far from being a calamity, is a great and unspeakable boon. "There are six days in which men ought to labour." A number of your fellow men are however, to be pitied. They toil from morning to night, from one end of the week to the other, and they have little before them, but just the prospect of discharging the obligations of life, and to obtain food for themselves and for their families. They live for bread; they live by bread. But there is a large number of our fellow men who are to be blamed. They live for the present world, and for that only. There is a man who will rise early and late take rest and will eat the bread of carefulness; who is devoted from day to day to the accomplishment of some worldly temporal scheme. He has no time for the charities and amenities of life; no time to look after his family; no time to read a good book; no time to read the Bible; no time to erect an altar to God in his dwelling; no time for any social fellowship that would elevate the mind and improve the heart. Even the Lord's day is employed by many in gathering up the fragments of the business of the week—they are living "without God and without hope in the world;" they have forgotten the great end of life; they have overlooked the simple and important purpose for which they were born! One might speak to such people; one might go and say to some one of them, "Brother, what will you do with your possession when you have got it? You may add house to house, field to field, or ship to ship, till there be no place left; but what will you do with your wealth? Will it make you happy? Will it accomplish the great end of life? Can you live upon it? What will you do with it? Can you take it away with you? "You brought nothing into the world, and it is certain you can carry nothing out."

"Man wants but little here below,
Nor wants that little long."

"Bodily exercise profiteth little; but godliness is profitable unto all things

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having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." Labour, O labour not for the bread which perisheth, but for the meat that endureth unto everlasting life, "for it is written man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God."

We are to apply this sentiment of the text once more, to correct the doubts and unbelief of many concerning Divine Providence. Some Christian people even have strong doubts about it. "Clouds of darkness are round about the Lord; righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne." These are great mysteries in the providential government of God; sometimes we see virtue depressed and down-trodden, while vice is exalted and prosperous. You will oftentimes find the excellence of the earth to be poor. "Harken, my beloved brethren, hath not God chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the promises." But some of you are rich, or you live in circumstances of mediocrity; you have no fear, no doubt about the future, you know that in the ordinary way you will have enough to support you all your life. "Give me neither poverty nor riches, but feed me with food convenient for me, lest I be full and deny thee, and say, who is the Lord? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain," was the prayer of Agar. A state of mediocrity is, on the whole, the most favourable to virtue, religion, and happiness. Some have to bear great burdens of poverty and distress—look at that poor widow whose last coal is gone, or that orphan child, whose parents are both dead, cast out upon the cold charity of a wide world, or the man who have been impoverished by the power of circumstances over which he had no control; and has a number of little ones depending upon for their daily bread—oh, these are experiences in connection with such circumstances, that we cannot always enter into; but our heavenly Father enters into them, and he is teaching such that, "Man doth not live by bread alone, but by every word of God," and that when one door is shut another has been opened, and when one fountain in the desert has been dried up, another living well has sprung up beneath your feet—God is able to provide. There are statements of the kind in the Bible—"I have been young, and now am old, yet never saw I the righteous forsaken nor his seed begging their bread." There are promises too—"Do good, and so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed." "Thy bread shall be given thee, and thy water shall be sure." There are reasonings, very conclusive upon the subject. "Behold the lillies of the field, they toil not, neither do they spin, and yet I shall say unto you, that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Doth God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, and shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?" "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing, and not one of them is forgotten before God;" will he not therefore take care of you? "Cast all your care upon him, for he careth for you." "Even to old age, I am he, and to hoary hairs I will bear and carry you." "When the poor and the needy seek water, and there is none, I, the God of Israel will hear and will help them." "He will feed you with the finest of the wheat." "He will give grace, and glory, and no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly." "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" Let this be your motto, "The Lord will provide." He hath said, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee," "that thou mightest know that man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God."

Finally, we may regard the language of the text as suggesting the means of life for the higher nature of man. It is very affecting, my brethren, to reflect that there are millions of the human family who have no adequate means of originating or supporting spiritual life? Is it not an affecting thought that the Heathen are feeding upon ashes? that a deceived heart hath turned them aside—and is it not an affecting thought too, that there is an ecclesiastical community in Christendom, that there is a church in the world professing to be the church of God, that there is a large influential community calling itself Christian and Catholic, that will not let men live by every word of God, but takes away the word of God from the people, does not let them have it free and unfettered? It may lift up its voice against a monopoly in the bread that perisheth, but it claims for its priesthood a monopoly of the bread that endureth unto eternal life! Let us do what we can to counteract its errors. Let us do what we can to meet the wants of the world. Let us multiply the bread of life, and seek to carry it into every part of God's earth, and stand up in every

valley, 'and upon every mountain, crying in the language of every people, "Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread, and you labour for that which satisfieth not? Harken diligently unto Christ, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul itslef delight in fatness." And while we do this, let us remind them of the fact that their spiritual life is to be supported by every word of God. I have been speaking this morning—though not without occasional reference to something beyond—about the life that now is, that thing which is made up of hope, fear, joy, and sorrow, expectation, and disappointment; but let me remind you, before I close, that there is a higher life. Man is immortal; immortal, I believe not by any natural constitution of mind, but immortal in consequence of the will of the Creator; for I know not why he who created mind could not annihilate mind; why he could not blot it out of being. But he has willed that it should live for ever. You will live when all the forms of material nature, belonging to the present world, shall have disappeared; you will live beyond the stars, you will live beyond the limits of time, you will live for ever in rapture or in woe. It is of infinite importance that spiritual life should be awakened in your souls. "Wherefore, he saith, awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light, (life). "The hour is coming, and now is in which the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and live." Is the spiritual life beyond, awakened in you? Have you woken up to this new being with new thoughts, new reflections, new emotions? Then, my dear brother, that life is begun in you, but remember that the spiritual life of man can only be supported by proper influences, by proper food. Just as the bodily, the physical life of man depends upon light, food, air, and the capacity of breathing; so if you take from man the word of God, the atmosphere of divine truth, and the influences that were given him from heaven—the power to believe and love the truth, spiritual life would become extinct—"twice dead, plucked up by the roots." But the life that you live is to be maintained; it is to be a life of faith, holiness, and happiness; it is to be supported by every word of God; by the word of the true gospel, which is incorruptible, and which liveth and abideth for ever. O let it be the nourishment of your mind, let it be the nutriment of your spirit. There is bread enough in your Father's house and to spare; you need not perish with hunger; live upon the incorruptible Word—the bread of God that cometh down from heaven. You are to live upon the incarnate Word, upon your Redeemer, who said, "My flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed; he that eateth me, even he shall live by me." You are to live by faith in a crucified Redeemer, by faith upon the promises of God's word, by faith upon the power of the living and eternal Spirit—you are to "live not by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."

To those of you who have received the truth in the love of the truth, we commend these representations, in the hope that they may tend to the invigoration of your faith, the confirming of your hope, and the comforting of your hearts. To those who have not been awakened to the enjoyment of this spiritual life we commend this truth as adopted, under God's blessing, to accomplish that end. We have prophesied this morning in the Valley of Vision; the bones may be very many, in the multitude, and they may be very dry. O breath of the Lord, breathe upon the slain that they may live. Let life from the dead be imputed to many.

Let me say just ere I close, that the life of which I have been speaking is intended to be consummated in the higher and more perfect life of heaven, where life is eternal, where life is uninterrupted, where life is preserved in its highest form, where life will run parallel in its duration with the throne of God, with the being of the Holy One. Long for it. Look for it. Wait for it. Prepare for it. Become united to him who is the resurrection and the life; and as you pass from time and enter into eternity, as you pass through life and go up out of life into the unseen, into the unknown world, commend your spirit, like the dying Christian proto-martyr into the hands of the Redeemer, saying in the language of the Psalmist, "Thou wilt show me the path of life." Amen.

THE BRAZEN SERPENT.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY EVENING, JULY 13, 1851,

BY THE REV. WILLIAM CHALMERS,

(Of Marylebone Presbyterian Church,)

AT EXETER HALL.

"And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life."—John iii. 14, 15.

WITHIN the whole range of Scripture we know not a single passage, that contains, in equally short compass, as clear and comprehensive an exhibition of the Christian system as the chapter from which our text is taken. It announces, with the utmost distinctness and solemnity, those great doctrines of revealed truth, on our reception of which hang suspended our everlasting destinies; and, in particular, in the verses just read, we have set before us—the entire gospel of our salvation, preached by the Redeemer himself, and that in the very first of his recorded discourses on the earth. Let us, then, shake ourselves free from that cold indifference which benumbs our spiritual frame, and, purging those eyes that are dull of seeing, and those hearts that are gross to understand, gird we up the loins of our minds; with meekness receive we the ingrafted word which is able to save our souls.

Our text contains an allusion to a remarkable event in Old Testament history; let us carry ourselves back, in imagination, to the scene. Picture to your minds a vast plain, over which, far as the eye can reach, the camp of Israel is outspread. To look from a distance, you would say—"How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel!" But nearer,—and you find that all within is horror, agitation, and despair. The people have sinned. Murmuring, ingratitude, and unbelief have drawn down the vengeance of heaven; and, in just judgment for their crimes, Jehovah has directed into the midst of their camp a host of the fiery serpents with which the wilderness abounds, whose bite is certain, if not instantaneous death. As these dreadful messengers roll their glistening folds along, havoc is dealt on every side. Neither sex, nor age, nor rank is spared; but each gives up its train of wretched victims to this fearful scourge. Much people have already fallen; and more you may behold around, wrapt, anguish-torn, in the serpent's coils, or convulsed in the last throes of less cruel death.

But soon the scene is changed! In the midst of judgment, God has remembered mercy. The piercing cries of a stricken people have entered into the ears of the Lord God of Sabaoth. The intercession of Moses in behalf of Israel has prevailed. At the Divine command, a serpent of brass has been made. It exactly resembles those of whose fatal bite the people die; and it has been lifted up on a pole in the centre of the camp. Proclamation is made—"It shall come to pass that every one that is bitten when he looketh upon it shall live." On the instant the career of death is arrested, and the triumph of life begins. Joy beams in every saddened countenance; new pulses of existence beat in every sinking heart. Again the tide of health rolls through the veins of the diseased. The maddening thirst and fever heat subside. The pallid cheek recovers its wonted hues. The fixed glazed eye sparkles with rekindled fire. The shriek of suffering is hushed, and the dumb agony is

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ended. For, as soon as each wounded Israelite hears the message of mercy, he looks, or, with expiring eye, he follows the friendly hand that points him to the healing emblem ; and as he looks, he lives !

Such is the scene referred to in the text ; and, in its various circumstances, it strikingly prefigured the salvation of the gospel, representing at once the deadliness of sin, the remedy provided for it, and the means by which that remedy is applied.

I. The text directs us, first, to the resemblance between *the state of the Israelites* (when God commanded Moses to form and erect the brazen serpent,) and *the state in which the gospel finds the whole human race.*

In both cases, it is one of wretchedness and death. Israel had been bitten by the fiery serpents, and many of the people had already died of their wounds ; and so we, brethren, through the agency of that Old Serpent the devil, have received the deadly bite of sin ; for, when he beguiled our mother Eve, he stung human nature to death, and dispersed a deadly venom through the race of man.

And sin affects the soul much in the same way as poison affects the body, producing similar disquietudes, and leading to similar results. Does poison in the system derange its functions, paralyze its energies, prostrate its strength, inflict on it severe suffering, and often put an end to the existence ? So is sin the poison of the soul. It disturbs the harmony and withers up the powers of the immortal spirit. It robs it of its vigour, and blasts its joys, and covers it with loathsomeness ; and, unless removed, it will inevitably put an end to its existence, as a creature destined for unending happiness in the service and enjoyment of God, and plunge it into all the horrors of eternal death. Oh ! sinner, thou art a dead man. Thou art lost, if thou art not cured !

Sin !—brethren, it is the most tremendous evil which creation knows. The malady of Israel was confined to a few—ours is universal. Theirs affected the body, not the soul—ours is fatal to both. Theirs had reference to time, and soon ran its little course—ours reaches into eternity. It is not only disorder and misery while we live ; it is unutterable anguish and ruin when we die. It is a fearful thing to receive the bite of a creature whose venom is death ; but what is that infliction compared to the second death in which sin unforgiven, unremoved, must terminate ? The Scriptures call it death ; but the worst part of it is not death. It is something so mournful as to find no parallel in any earthly misery ; something so woeful, and so dread, that as God himself has abstained from words in which to describe it, so our enfeebled minds, except perhaps, in some moment of their acutest pangs, are utterly unable to form the faintest conception of it. What was the wretchedness of Israel compared to the wrath of God, the effects of which are merely hinted at in those thrilling words—“DEPART FROM ME YE CURSED.” To be execrated, condemned, and cast out by men is a trivial matter ; but to be execrated, condemned, and cast out by Almighty God ! What tongue can tell ? What imagination can conceive it ? What is this curse ? It is a charge to the universe to dry up each fountain of delight, and to open in full flood upon the guilty soul every avenging stream ! What does this curse ? It seals up the door of heaven against the human spirit, and blots out the star of hope ! It is nothing less than eternal banishment from light and life into regions prepared for the devil and his angels ; where the soul shall be enveloped and penetrated with misery, immense and infinite ; where it shall find in all beings, a universal hell ; a hell within, a hell without, a hell in God himself ! Oh ! brethren, to have the presence of God in his wrath to devour us, or in his power to uphold or to increase our capacity for suffering, but to be for ever exiled from the presence of his grace and glory, and victims of a living death—our hand pressed upon an aching, burning heart—to wind our melancholy way, through a wilderness of sorrow and despair, ages without end ! The thought is enough to make the ears of all who hear it, tingle ! Did we fully believe it—were we in our right minds—it would appal us ; yet it is true. The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it. Such, if left to ourselves, will the issue be. No art, no wisdom, no labour of man can deliver us from it. Our wound is incurable, and refus-

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to be healed. We can no more discover a remedy for it, than could the Israelites find a balm against the serpent's poisonous bite. But "as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so shall the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life."

II. But not merely is there a striking resemblance between the malady of the Israelites and that with which we are burdened, there is, secondly, a strong analogy between *the remedy provided for Israel, and the remedy offered to us.*

"The Lord said unto Moses, make thee a fiery serpent, and set it on a pole; and it shall come to pass that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live." Now just as that brazen serpent was God's ordinance for the cure of the wounded Israelites, in the same manner is Christ, uplifted on the cross, God's ordinance for the cure of the perishing family of Adam.

It is to his uplifting on the cross, his shameful, bloody death on the accursed tree, that Christ here refers. This is the meaning he elsewhere gives to the expression of the text, as in John viii. 28—"When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he;" and again, in chapter xii. verse 32—"And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me;" in regard to which, the Evangelist immediately adds—"This he said, signifying what death he should die." And so we learn, that strange, and, to all outward appearance, incredible as it may seem, nevertheless that ignominious and violent death of Christ, in all his weakness and in all his woe, upon the cross, bore the same relation to human guilt and wretchedness, as the elevation of the brazen serpent in the wilderness bore to Israel's wounds and dying. Just as the brazen emblem was reared on high, that the thousands of Israel might behold it, and live; so, in that wondrous scene when, nailed to the accursed tree as one unfit to live, and suspended between earth and heaven, as it were, an outcast from them both, Christ became a spectacle to our ruined world, and provided a real and effective remedy against all the evils of sin. For it was none other than the everlasting Son of God who appeared in our world, and was uplifted on the cross. It was Jehovah's equal—the Almighty's fellow—the man of God's right hand—whom the sword of justice smote on Calvary. There he bore our sins in his own body on the tree. There, standing forth as the surety and the substitute of transgressors, he took upon him the burden of their guilt and shame, made full atonement to the injured law and justice of heaven in their room, and, by his infinite merit, procured the forgiveness and the favour of God. Here, however, observe an important difference between the two cases. The remedy of Israel was worthless in itself. It possessed no virtue, even as a secondary cause, in effecting a cure. It derived all its efficacy from the Divine appointment. Ours is of incalculable intrinsic value. "We were not redeemed with corruptible things, such as silver and gold," and brass, "but with the precious blood of Christ." The brazen serpent availed for Israel's healing, only because it was the ordinance of God; but Christ is our deliverer, because he was a real and atoning sacrifice—for man, to God; for the rebel, to the Sovereign from whom he had revolted; for the guilty, to the justice which his crimes had awakened; because he was made a curse for the accursed; and staggering under the burden of their responsibilities, was wounded for transgressions not his own; and bruised for iniquities, which he knew not; and poured out his soul to a death which he deserved not: therefore it is that by his anguish we have ease, that by his stripes we are healed, that by his dying we have life!

III. But observe, thirdly, that there is a striking analogy between *the application of the remedy*, provided for Israel, and, *the application of the remedy* provided for us.

"Every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it shall live." Simply to "look" upon the brazen serpent was the appointed means by which Israel got the benefit of God's ordinance for the healing of his malady; and in like manner—it is "looking to Jesus," that is, faith in Christ, which is the corresponding means of our becoming interested in him as God's ordinance for our salvation. It is by faith that we look upon the Saviour, and are cured. Faith, you know, is often spoken of in the scripture as "the eye of the soul," and the exercise of

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faith, as "looking"—"Before whose eyes," says the apostle to the Galatians, "Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth crucified amongst you." The Galatians had never beheld Christ in the flesh with the bodily eye; hence, "before whose eyes," must mean, before whose faith. "They shall look on me whom they have pierced, and mourn;" that is, they shall look with the eye of faith. And again, "This is the will of him that sent me, that every one who seeth the Son, and believeth on him, (where seeing and believing are used as synonymous terms), shall have everlasting life."

Mark, then, what is the great connecting link between us and the Author of our salvation—what is the grace that occupies this important place in the scheme of human salvation. It is not repentance, nor reformation, nor love, nor sincere obedience,—no! but especially it is faith—faith in Christ uplifted on the cross a sacrifice for sin—faith in Christ as the heaven-appointed ordinance for the removal of its guilt and punishment—which is the means of our becoming interested in the deliverance which the crucified Saviour brings. Nothing can be more distinctly asserted than this is asserted in the text. "Even so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in him, shall not perish, but have eternal life." Most plainly is it taught us, in these words, that, in the scheme of our salvation, the exercise of faith corresponds exactly with that "looking" to the brazen serpent which brought in all its efficacy, to the dying Israelite, the heavenly provision for his healing. The same truth is asserted again and again, in the succeeding verses of this chapter—verses 16, 18, 36; and, not to multiply references, it is the result of the apostle's argument in the epistle to the Romans, when he says, (chapter iii. verse 28)—"Therefore we conclude that a man is justified"—in other words, freed from the penalty of sin and restored to the favour of God,—"justified without the deeds of the law."

And here you may learn at once, the *object* and the *nature* of the faith that justifies. As for its immediate *object* it is Christ crucified—Christ uplifted upon the cross a sacrifice—Christ dying on the accursed tree to make atonement for sin—Christ in the crowning act of his remedial work; and as for the *nature* of faith, it is a simple "looking to Jesus"—such a look as that which the wounded Israelite directed to the brazen serpent—earnest, grateful, confiding. Just as it came to pass that when the Israelite beheld the serpent of brass, he lived: when, feeling that he was dying of the serpent's bite, and knowing that the brazen serpent was the ordinance of God for his deliverance; in obedience to the divine command, and trusting to the divine faithfulness; not carelessly, but with fixed attention, and with strong desire; he fastened his eyes upon it, and instantly was cured; so it is by faith that we look to Christ for deliverance, and, as we look are healed. Whatever sinner, deeply conscious of his sinfulness and exposure to Divine wrath, receives the record which God has given of his Son, and recognizing him as the heaven-appointed ordinance for the salvation of the guilty, casts aside all confidence in what he himself feels, or does, or suffers, and humbly looks to, and simply confides in, to Christ alone for salvation, that sinner shall not perish, but shall have eternal life. The sentence that bound him over to wrath shall be repealed. The poison of corruption shall be extracted from his moral frame. His soul shall regain its health and vigour; and, springing forth in the active exercise of the faculties which sin had paralyzed, he shall yield his members instruments of righteousness unto God, and, like the recovered Israelite, pursue his pilgrimage through the wilderness of this world, to the heavenly Canaan.

And now let us try to bring together and to realize these great truths of which the scene in the camp of Israel furnishes so striking an emblem. I say, let us endeavour to realize them; for it is not enough to know them merely as pleasing coincidences, or as general facts.

There is here one material difference between our situation and that of the Israelites; and it is this—that, while, from the very nature of their malady, they could not but be painfully alive to its existence, and ardently desirous of a remedy, alas! it is not the least part of our disease, that we know it not!

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So blind are we to the character, and so deaf to the claims of the Creator that we do not perceive any such contrariety between Him and ourselves, as the Bible tells us that there is; we cannot see how sin should be so hateful in His eyes, or so ruinous to ourselves as divine wisdom has averred. Now this ignorance and insensibility are our saddest calamity, as well as an aggravation of our guilt. For in vain is a skilful and compassionate physician set before us, unless we know and feel our disease. In vain is a remedy of unfailing efficacy put within our reach so long as we imagine ourselves to be in perfect health. "The whole need not a physician, but they that are sick." The people of Israel, we are told, when the serpents were in the camp, came to Moses and said, "We have sinned in that we have spoken against the Lord and against thee. Pray unto the Lord that he take the serpents from us." And so, it is not until, conscious of our deadly wounds, and cruel tormentors, we are prepared to fall down before the throne of grace, with the like confession and the like prayer, that we can derive the slightest benefit from that most glorious ordinance which God has provided for our deliverance.

Men and brethren, let me press this upon you; not as a novel or ingenious thought, but as a very true, and a deeply important thought. I am about to proclaim to you, in the name of Christ, the free offer of a Saviour, and, in him, of the blessings of a complete and everlasting salvation; but what will this avail you, unless you are pricked in your hearts, (after the manner of the apostle's hearers,) with such a sense of your guilt and danger as shall lead you in the spirit of anxious inquiry, to ask—"Men and brethren, what shall we do?" If men are not sensible of their malady, they will never seek a remedy. None but the burdened will look for ease. None but the self-condemned will accept a pardon.

Review, then, for a moment, your characters and lives; and you will not fail to discover—if you have not discovered it before—the peril of your state; and that if you have never felt alarmed, it is not because there are no grounds for your being so. Consider, then, that although you do not see the ten thousandth part of the sins which you have committed, God sees them all; that they do not escape his notice, because they escape yours. "Thou hast set our iniquities before thee;" says the Psalmist, "and our secret sins in the light of thy countenance." What though these sins of yours be numerous beyond conception, countless as the moments you have breathed, or as the movements of your ever restless minds? His arithmetic can reckon all, his pen can write them in the book of his remembrance,—not only your more heinous and daring sins, not only those of which your conscience is afraid; but innumerable transgressions which you have long forgotten, which, perhaps never gave you a moment's uneasiness. You have always sinned, under his immediate eye. He had his piercing gaze upon you, not less in the shades of night, when you devised mischief upon your beds; than in the light of day, when you walked in a way which was not right. His eye beheld you,—when you spoke evil of your neighbour, and said that which you knew to be untrue—when you wilfully profaned his holy Sabbath, and took his sacred name in vain—when you restrained prayer from God, and charity from men—when you wallowed in the mire of sensuality and intemperance, making a god of your belly, and a glory of your shame—when you returned to presumptuous sin, after confessing, and lamenting, it may be after, solemnly forswearing it—when you quenched the light of conviction, and fell upon your conscience as it testified for God, and violently stopped its mouth, strangling, and stabbing it—when you cast contempt upon God's wrath, and did despite to God's mercy—when you crucified the Son of God afresh, by refusing to embrace his salvation, and covered him with new and open ignominy, by wearing the badges of his discipleship, and yet spurning the character which he requires of his chosen.

Do you think, O sinner, that God is altogether such a one as yourself? that he does not regard these things? that the anger of his law is not kindled by them? and that he will pardon them, for a few tears wept, it may be, on a sick or dying bed, and receive you full of enmity and loathsome with corruption, into his

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spotless presence ? Shake off the vain imagination ! It is an insane reverie ! "The Philistines are upon thee !" "What meanest thou, O sleeper ? Arise and call upon thy God !" Please yourself no more with this guilty dream ; lest the realities of the unseen world, bursting upon you with the light of eternity, startle you as with the lightning's flash from your drowsy temptation ! If your case were hopeless, if your day of grace were done, perhaps, it were cruelty to tear you from your delusion ; perhaps it were kindness to leave you unaroused, till the grim herald of God's wrath enter your dungeon, strike off your chains, and lead you forth to execution. But mercy and pardon are still offered you. Your sun, though sinking, is still above the horizon. Your day of grace has not altogether fled. What, though there be the mutterings of the distant thunder. The storm hath not yet burst upon your head. Those sins of which you are this night convicted, by the strictness of the law, may yet be forgiven you, through the grace of the gospel. Even now, we have a message for you, from the God of heaven. Awake, and hear, that you may live and not die ; for "as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so hath the Son of man been lifted up : that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life."

Is there one among you, whose conscience is pierced with a sense of the infinite evil of sin, and of your wide partnership in its criminality and hatefulness ? Any one whose heart is burdened with the weight of its corruption, and, apprehending the certainty and the fierceness of the coming severity and sword, is disposed to cry out with the awakened jailer of Philippi, "What must I do to be saved ?" I charge you, brother, sister, I charge you, in God's name, to beware of listening to any answer which Satan, or an evil heart, or a blinded world, may suggest to that all important inquiry. It is not every foundation that will bear up the weight of a building for eternity ! It is not every remedy that will heal the festering, deadly bite of sin ! If you put trust in your own miserable righteousness, or in the decency of your lives, or the harmlessness of your conduct, or your humiliations, your charities, your services, your sacraments, your tears, your prayers : you do so at your peril ! Your righteousness is at the best but "rags ;" utterly unfit to clothe the nakedness of your soul ; nay, "filthy rags," which pollute and make odious, instead of adorning and rendering acceptable. Your discharge of social and relative duties is not the giving of the undivided heart to God. Your services, your tears, your prayers, can never satisfy the justice of heaven, or quench the fire of the wrath which sin has kindled in the bosom of God. Oh ! no ; it is Christ alone—Christ uplifted on the cross, a sacrifice for sin—that is the ordinance of God for your deliverance ; and the safe sure answer to the great demand—"What must I do to be saved ?" is only that of the inspired apostle to him who made it ; and it exactly corresponds with the declaration of the text—"Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." "Say not in thine heart, who shall ascend into heaven ?" (that is, to bring Christ down from above :") He has already come ! "Or, who shall descend into the deep ? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.) The Lord is risen indeed ! "But what saith it ? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart : that is, the word of faith, which we preach ; that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart, that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved."

Do you ask me to describe this faith in Christ which saves the soul ? Brethren, it is so simple that I know not how to describe it. It is just a hearty belief in the testimony of God concerning Christ, a giving credit to his promises, a confidence in his power, and truth, and love. Say not "how is it to be exercised ?" Imagine yourself to be, at this moment, in the condition of one of the Israelites dying of your wounds, and that there had just fallen on your ear the proclamation of God regarding the brazen remedy :—would you not, without a moment's hesitation or delay, get within sight of the object ; and, believing the testimony of heaven regarding it, recognizing it as the ordinance of God for your deliverance, would you not fix your eyes upon it, and live ? Then, as Christ is set forth by God, your deliverer ; as he is no

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less than Jehovah's everlasting Son, partaker of his greatness and his power, of his boundless mercy and his unfathomable grace; and as his language to you is—"Look unto me and be ye saved all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else"—just turn that eye of yours from every other object, and fasten it on this alone. Renounce expectation of deliverance from any other quarter, and seek it solely in Christ. Make a heartfelt application to him for a cure. Cordially accept him as the dispenser of the divine remedy. In humble confidence, commit your immortal soul into his hands; assured of the efficacy of his blood to cleanse it, and of his grace to sanctify it, and of his power and love to keep and save it.

Think not that some good qualities, some improved dispositions on your part, are requisite to authorise your application. Imagine not that you are too sinful at this moment to entertain hopes of success. Say not that you have no warrant, in your present circumstances, for thus looking to the Saviour. No qualifications are requisite, unless a willingness to be saved be one. No previous attempts to heal yourself are necessary. No warrant but the word of God is required. The invitation, nay, the command, is all you need. Come, therefore, as you are. Bring with you nothing but your misery and your wounds. Bring all of these, but leave everything else behind. Call to mind again these dying Israelites. Did they refuse the brazen remedy because they had just been murmuring against God who appointed it? Did they plead their guilt, their extreme suffering, their dying state, as a reason why they should hesitate to look upon the healing emblem? Did they talk of waiting till their disease and anguish were partially gone? Oh, no! They knew that, but for their disease, distress, and danger, the remedy had never been appointed, had never been required; and so they fixed on it an eager eye—

"And as they look'd,
They ceased to die."

And, brethren, if you are really conscious of your spiritual malady—if it is your burden, your sorrow, your dread—if you feel your urgent need of deliverance—if you are willing to receive, and, above all things, desire it—if despairing of doing ought to deserve it, you are prepared as guilty, condemned, helpless, dying men and women, to embrace it—then you want no other warrant. The remedy is provided just for you. The way to it is open,—as open as an omnipotent God can make it. Raise up to Christ upon the cross the eye of faith, and you shall enjoy it; for "whosoever believeth in him, shall not perish, but shall have eternal life."

Oh that one word "*whosoever?*"—it is a matchless word in such a context! It is as a blank, which you may fill up with any name—your own name—if you please. It is a word that tells you,—the gospel has a message for all, and a boon for all, and hands round the cup of life in a dying world to all. It tells you that none are excluded from its salvation, but those who exclude themselves. It tells you that no long continuance in sin—no aggravated guilt—no tardiness in seeking mercy—no supposed or real unfitness to receive it can ever bar the way—that it is as free as the air you breathe, as irrespective of moral character as the light of the sun which daily shines upon the evil and the good,—that none are excepted, none preferred, the vilest as welcome as the best.

That word shall be our short and simple answer to all your proud objections and unbelieving fears. Do any of you say—that salvation is not open and free, because some only are elected to eternal life? We only point you to that single word—"whosoever!" Do any say—that their faith is weak and wavering, and, because it clings not to the Saviour with a tenacity proportioned to their need, and to his sufficiency, it is of no avail? Again we answer, "Whosoever!" Do any say that they have departed from the good ways of God, and that their disease is daily gathering strength and fierceness, while their ingratitude and apostacy form an insurmountable barrier to the Saviour's grace? Our only answer still shall be—"Whosoever!" Do any say that they have long neglected the great salvation, and allowed its invitations, and warnings, and appeals, to pass by unheeded, and that their case is desperate?

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Oh ! think of that bright word before you—“*Whosoever!*” Do any say that they have plunged into the revelry of animal passion, and, forgetting that they were made in the image of God, have degraded their natures to the level of the brutes which perish, and that from them all hope is fled? Our simple answer yet again shall be—“*Whosoever!*” Do any say that with a proud and daring infidelity they have defied the Almighty Father, trodden under foot the blood of the Eternal Son, and done desite even to the Spirit of grace, and that, with their everlasting welfare, all is over. Our all-sufficient answer is—“*Whosoever!*” Let the aggravation of man’s guilt be piled high as the highest heaven ; that word shall scale the dizzy height ! Let his pollution and misery, however deep, be only short of hell ; that word shall fathom the mighty depth ! It can penetrate, and explore, and comprehend the utmost verge of human wretchedness and woe. Hath it not taken the wings of the morning, and hied to the uttermost parts of the sea, and, ten thousand times ten thousand over, breathed hope into the desponding, and life into the dead ? Oh ! no where on this earth, once trodden by the foot of God, does a sinner lift up the eye of an humble, affectionate, imploring faith to the Saviour on the cross—helpless and hopeless, were it not for help and hope in Him, but the plague departs, and death is mastered ; the heart is made whole and its energies restored ; condemned, he is acquitted ; ruined, he is saved ; accursed, he is blessed for evermore ! For where the cross of Christ is seen, though far off and faintly, there the demon of despair can never dwell. It is a holy sign that drives that hateful, God-dishonouring, man-destroying fiend away ; it is a tree of life, round which there gathers a bright angel-sisterhood—peace, hope, and joy, spiritual health, holiness, immortality.

One word to those who refuse this proffered grace, this sovereign remedy : who, insensible to the presence and the ravages of their distemper, seek not to be healed ; or, through perversity, or pride, will not submit themselves to the “counsel of God for their salvation.” Alas ! your doom is justly certain and severe. For you reject the suitable means, the sufficient means, the only means of healing and escape. There is no other pathway of restoration, of return to spiritual health, and to the favour of God. The elevation of Christ upon the cross, was no unforeseen event, no happy accident. It had its origin, not in chance, but in a moral necessity ; it was fixed upon in the determinate counsel of God. “Even so must the Son of man be lifted up.” In this way alone can mercy save you, without sulllying the purity or tarnishing the glory of Jehovah. Despise it, and “there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation !”

Ah ! one day yet will Christ be lifted up to the gaze of an assembled universe, and gladly then, will they, who bend no eye of faith upon him now, cast towards him an imploring look ; but he will be uplifted in that angust, tremendous day, no longer as a Saviour, but as a stern, uncompromising judge. Prayers then extorted will be vain ; and your eager gaze shall only draw upon you that lightning glance, beneath whose scathing fires you shall shrivel into spectacles of terror, and become monuments of wrath for evermore ! “Write,” says God, “for these words are faithful and true : the unbelievers shall have their part in the lake that burneth, where their worm dieth not, and their fire is not quenched ;”—from which, may God of his infinite mercy deliver us all, for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

THE HEIRS OF GOD.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JULY 20, 1851,

BY THE REV. THOMAS BINNEY,

AT EXETER HALL,

"Children of God; and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ."—
Romans viii, 16, 17.

THE worth of any man's opinions of the reasonableness of the views, and the propriety of the language of another, on any given subject, must of course depend on the extent and accuracy of his knowledge of that subject. Sentiments and phraseology that may seem extravagant, mysterious, absurd, may appear so, only because he, to whom they thus appear, is ignorant of the ground on which they rest. Men devoted to science, literature, and art, entertain ideas, and use terms, which, to the uninstructed, are perfectly unintelligible; and in the same light—as unintelligible, unmeaning, mysterious—the ideas and the language of the Christian may appear, to men of the world, who have no spiritual acquaintance with the scriptures, or experimental knowledge of the nature and the duties, the hopes and the conflicts of the inward life.

In relation to secular knowledge, indeed, to art or science, men who know nothing of the matter, and who have never studied it, are often willing to confess their ignorance; they will refrain from judging, and admit that they have no right to have an opinion; however strange the things that are said, they believe that those who say them have good grounds for what they advance; however inexplicable to them, the terms employed, they have no doubt of their perfect propriety, and that those who employ them understand each other.

In religion, however, it is often very different. Here, most people seem to think that they can understand without study, and may condemn without examination. The very men who will be modest in relation to a science of which they know little, will, in relation to religion, of which they know less, pronounce with emphasis and precipitancy, perhaps with scorn, against sentiments and language drawn directly from the Word of God, drawn by those who have given the subject their special attention, and who ought to have the benefit of that fact.

Thoughts of this sort are very naturally suggested by such a text as the one now before us. It is very remarkable. There, however, it is. "If children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ." It is God's own statement; intended to convey an important meaning; and it does convey it very plainly; at least, it is plain enough, clear, and significant, to many an earnest, spiritual man, who, though unlettered, may be a better commentator than some learned clerks. To such an one, it has neither mystery nor

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difficulty about it ; to him, it means just what it says ; and this, however wonderful and great, he believes, feels, and enjoys ; rejoices in it, as one of the calm, deep, true sayings of God—as worthy of all acceptation—however some, who may never have bestowed an hour's thought upon the subject, may recoil from what they regard and condemn as an absurd and violent extravagance of language.

We shall attempt, in our further remarks, First, to explain and illustrate the text ; and, Secondly, to establish upon it a few general observations.

I. The first thing to be noticed in the passage, is the supposition in the second clause, with respect to the title or privilege referred to in the first, “*If children, then heirs.*” It might be taken, I think, without violence, to imply that men might *not* be children, “the children of God.” And hence the title would import something peculiar, something which belonged to, or distinguished, some men and not others. Unquestionably, in a general sense, God is the Father of all mankind ; all are his offspring—the whole race constitute the great family or household of humanity, of which he is the parent. But the New Testament continually speaks of another relation ; a higher form of paternity and childhood, that may subsist between God and us. This men may, or may not sustain. If, in this sense, they are children, then are they heirs ; but they may not be children, and then heirship is, of course, excluded.

Any race of beings with respect to whom it can be a supposition or a question, whether or not they are the children of God, must be in a very peculiar moral state ; it must be one of probation, transition, or possibility of transition ; one, with great mixture of event and circumstance about it, and capable of coming to very different results. The world in which they live, cannot, properly speaking, be a world of results, but rather of causes and beginnings ; their condition cannot be either the highest or the lowest ; the best or the worst, of which we can conceive. If all men, without exception, were the children of God, there would be no “if” about it, or with respect to any of them ; just as any hypothetical expression is unknown in heaven ; or if all men, were so placed, that it was impossible for them ever to sustain any relation to God, but the general one of creatures, then, also, there would be no room for question or doubt as to any of them being children ; just as there is none in respect to the brutes that perish, or to the devils and the damned in hell. The possibility of using conditional or hypothetical language, in relation to men, implies and involves the idea, that while they may be, in the language of scripture, “children of the wicked one,” “enemies to God,” “in the flesh,” and so on, they may also be sons, or children of God, in the highest and most emphatic acceptance.

In relation to this subject, we may employ the language of the apostle respecting another—“ Howbeit, that is not first that is spiritual, but that which is natural, and afterwards that which is spiritual.” In neither case, however, does it necessarily follow that the spiritual must succeed the natural. Men may live, and never be changed in the spirit of their minds ; and they may die, and not rise after the likeness of the Lord’s glorious body. But if any man is a child of God, in that peculiar sense to which we are referring, then we mean to say that the scripture teaches, that this is his second state, not his first ; that he has undergone, or been the subject of, a process, by which he has passed from the one to the other. This process is described in very strong terms, and illustrated by very striking figures in the New Testament.

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Men are said to be "born again," "born from above," "born of the Spirit," "regenerated," "created anew," "quickened," "raised from the dead," and so on. All which terms are intended to express the operation upon the soul of the Spirit of God, changing the natural heart, and infusing the principle of a Divine and spiritual life. We cannot suppose that this is accomplished by the mechanical agency of any outward rite, or that the Holy Spirit makes the administration of that rite, the invariable occasion on which it takes place, or even as absolutely necessary to its occurrence. It is rather represented as connected with the belief of the truth, the exercise of repentance, faith in Christ. And baptism, whether administered to infants or adults, is only an outward significant emblem, of the *necessity* there is for a fallen and corrupt human being to be the subject of a divine change, in order to its being constituted a child of God, and a member, *spiritually*, of the household of faith.

In addition to an actual spiritual birth, a Divine change, by which a sinful man becomes a child of God, as by his natural birth he is the child of his parents—in addition to this, we have the frequent use of the word "adoption," to express or illustrate the process by which man passes from his first to his second condition. This word is used in allusion to what may take place in society—and what frequently took place in the times of the apostles—the reception into a family of a slave or a stranger, in connection with legal acts and documents, by which he was constituted, to all intents and purposes, in the eye of the law, a member of that family, so that he was contemplated as standing in the relation of a child to the individual who thus adopted him. In like manner, men, who, contemplated as sinners, are strangers and foreigners, far from God, and in bondage to the devil, are taken out of this state of distance and degradation, and by an act of God's grace and mercy, adopted into his family, and constituted his sons. It is an act, not of whim or caprice, but one regulated by fixed and equitable principles, being founded on the work of Christ, by which God can be just while he justifies the guilty, and he himself justified in taking the trusting and penitent and pleading man, changing him from a rebel to a child, and sending into his heart the spirit of adoption, through which he calls him, "Abba, Father."

These two processes cannot be considered as so separate and distinct, as that one can take place without the other. It is true, that one that is born a child, does not need to be adopted into the family; and hence, it would seem to be enough, to think of men as regenerated or born of God, without adverting to the other figure; but it would not be enough to think merely of adoption, without referring to the term which describes an actual and subjective change; since, though men might by a legal act, adopt, and constitute an individual son, who should turn out to have no harmony with the household,—God, in calling a man a child, makes him one,—impresses upon him something of his own image, and infuses something of his own disposition. So that he is not only spoken of and treated as if he were a son, but he is a son, by (in the very strong language of the apostle,) "being made a partaker of the Divine nature." And however humbling it may be, to think of the necessity in which we stand, of adoption into the family, and renewal to the likeness of God, yet that nature is not to be disparaged, respecting which such things are possible. A brute animal could not be adopted and made a child by man; nor if it were, could it be made the subject of human sympathies and affections. And so, unless man,

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in spite of all his corruption, had within him a nature distinguished by moral and religious capacity, it would be impossible for him to be either adopted by, or born to God ; or if he were, it could only be by a process that would amount to the miraculous, and which would actually transform him into another order or species of being from what he was at first ; and this, no one supposes that man's second birth involves or effectuates. He has that within him, which can be the subject of the Divine act and influence to which we refer, without his becoming in consequence more than man ; and that nature, of which this can be said, however ruined now, must have been originally great and God-like.

2. The next thing to be noticed, is the distinguished privilege resulting from this relationship : "If children, then heirs."

An heir is one, who by legal or natural right, possesses a title to an inheritance. A stranger may be constituted such, in virtue of the will and deed of another ; a child may be such, from natural relationship. Both these ideas are employed in scripture to illustrate the subject. Men, considered as guilty, need pardon, or justification, which is a legal as well as merciful act on the part of God, by which the relation of men to law is altered ; so that, instead of being regarded as guilty, and exposed to punishment, they are looked upon as if they were righteous, and delivered from condemnation. It is in connexion with this act, that adoption into the family of God is more especially to be regarded, and the heirship of the adopted as flowing from that act. Thus Paul speaks in the epistle to Titus—" *Being justified, we are made heirs, according to the hope of eternal life.*" As possessing a fallen and corrupt nature, men need to be regenerated and renewed, in virtue of which they become like God, and are his children, not merely by a legal or declaratory act, but by the positive sanctification of their nature, and then heirship results, by way of natural consequence, from their filial relationship. "Thou art no more a servant, but a son ; and if a son, then an heir." Among men, heirship often depends upon primogeniture—the inheritance belongs only to the first-born ; as Isaac was Abraham's heir, to whom the parental property descended, while his other children had portions given them, and were sent away. By the constitution of the gospel, however, all are regarded as in possession of the rights and privileges of primogeniture. The church is the church of God's "first-born ones ;" each individual enjoys the "birthright;" the promise is sure to all the seed ; all, without exception, are heirs, like Isaac : "If Christ's, then Abraham's seed, and heirs according to promise."

It is worthy of particular remark, however, how, in the text, the idea of heirship is greatnessened and amplified by the concluding clause. Not satisfied with the statement, "if children," then heirs"—the apostle adds, with a sort of irrepressible exultation—"heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ."

These words, of course, very much enlarge and heighten the conception, which Christians are permitted to entertain, of the kingdom prepared for them, and the glory that is yet to be revealed. A person may be the heir of one who has very little to bestow, or the expectant of a very slender patrimony ; or he may share the honours, and succeed to the titles, of one, whom the monarch may have ennobled for some service, and, as that was more or less eminent, his expectations may be enlarged or limited in proportion. But no words would seem to be adequate, to express the lustre and largeness of the hopes which they may indulge, who are "heirs of God, and co-heirs with Jesus Christ."

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"Heirs of God." It would seem to be impossible to have too high ideas, of what may be anticipated by those, who are the children and heirs of a Divine Parent ; of him who created and who possesses all things, whose domain is the universe in all its extent, grandeur, and resources ; whom all creatures obey and serve ; who has the command over all instruments of satisfaction and joy, and who can make every thing subservient to the ends and purposes of his love ; whose paternal affection is intense and measureless, and who even speaks of himself as the portion of his people. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man, what God hath laid up for them that love him." We read of the "riches of the glory of his inheritance;" "the inheritance of the saints in light;" "an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away," to the lively hope of which, the Father hath begotten those who, as his children, are "heirs according to the promise." "Now are we the sons of God, but it doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." "He that overcometh, shall inherit all things."

"Joint heirs with Christ." There is something in this expression, still more emphatic than in the first ; something more than the idea of filial relationship to God—it is that of fraternal oneness with Christ, and of expectation from the Father according to what he hath prepared for him. That to which the Christian is heir, is not merely the inheritance of a son, but of such a son as Christ is represented to be : "the only begotten, and well-beloved of the Father, in whom he is ever well pleased," whom he delights to honour : one, who merited by the most distinguished service, the highest exaltation ; who glorified God on earth, glorified him in the view of the universe, magnified his law, fulfilled his will, accomplished his purposes, and who is actually "set down on the right hand of the Majesty on high." The language of the text connects the Christian with the claims of Christ, and warrants the expectation of his ultimately sharing, in some sense, whatever he inherits. In consistency with this, Christ himself frequently speaks of giving to his people the glory that the Father had given to him—appointing them a kingdom, as he had received one—of their sitting down upon his throne, as he had sat down with his Father on his ;—all which expressions, though not admitting of a literal application, yet sufficiently convey or illustrate the idea of the co-heirship of the Christian with Christ. The church is his body, and whatever glory invests the head, the members participate. "The joy that was set before him" he has realized and inherits, and the welcome which he will give at last to "those that are his," will be, to bid them enter into that joy. "Heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ."

II. From this brief illustration of the passage, we proceed, in conclusion, to draw two or three general observations.

1. We are taught by it, in the first place, to think of the love and power of God. Of his love, in the solicitude he felt, to restore a race of apostate creatures, and to admit them to a new, filial relationship,—and in the construction and development of the scheme of mercy by which that was to be secured ; his power, or the might and efficacy of his grace, which can subdue and expel the corruption of the heart, and can call forth, from the wretchedness and rebellion of human nature, a spiritual form of purity and obedience ; of stones, as it were, or worse than stones, "raising up children to Abraham!" "Herein is love ; not that we loved God, but that God loved us, and

sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." The object of that propitiation, and, of course, of that love, is thus stated—"In the fulness of time, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." God hath made man great, by thus setting his love upon him; and he goes forth, in connection with the proclamation of it, to bless the word of his servants, and to give efficacy to the weapons that are not carnal, but spiritual, that he may bring down every high thing into the obedience of Christ, and change proud and apostate rebels, into meek, humble, and loving children. "You hath he quickened, who were dead; dead in trespasses and in sins." "By the operation of his mighty power, he hath raised us up, and made us sit together in heavenly places with Christ." "The unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God;" "and such were some of you, but—ye are washed, justified, sanctified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." The two mightiest things in the universe are truth and love, and these are combined in the agencies connected with our salvation; the one is the instrument, and the other is the very essence of the Being who uses and blesses it—"Of his own will begat he us, by the word of truth." "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath begotten us again to a lively hope, of an undefiled and eternal inheritance."

2. There is something in the text strongly suggestive of the ultimate security of the Church. Men may be disinherited by their fathers, and disappointed in all their expectations: this may be the result of parental injustice and caprice, or the consequence of very aggravated filial disobedience. Now, without asserting that it is absolutely impossible for any who are once the children of God, ever to be cut off, and disinherited, to have their pardon revoked, and the Divine Spirit so withdrawn, that their nature falls back again into even a worse state than their first condition of unregeneracy; without asserting, I say, that this is absolutely impossible, in the face of some fearful texts which seem to countenance the contrary, yet they, I think, are to be pardoned, who find in such expressions as those before us, strong grounds for confidence and consolation in respect to the preservation and security of the children of God. "If children, then heirs—heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ." I could not go so far, as to say that it is as unlikely that a co-heir of Christ should be disinherited, as that Christ himself should; but certainly, if there be any truth in pardon and adoption as positive acts of God, and in regeneration as the real infusion into the soul of a Divine principle of life, and in men being constituted or becoming the children of God through these means, and especially when these are considered in connection with the stupendous facts of the mediatorial and redemptive work of Christ—then, it certainly must be confessed, that it seems difficult to believe, that those who are brought into such a peculiar relation to God, should come short of the inheritance at last; or, if they may, it would seem to follow, that it must arise from some kind or degree of delinquency, of which it is not easy to form a conception. They, indeed, who are spoken of as begotten as children to the hope of the inheritance, are also said to be "kept by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation;" and he, through whose merit and work they become sons, and with whom they are, in consequence, co-heirs—he says respecting them, "Holy Father, I will"—or desire—"also, that they may be with me where I am, to behold my glory; for thou lovest them as thou hast loved me." If children, then heirs—if heirs, then

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possessors. Without affirming that this is always, and necessarily true, in every individual case, and without denying that it may, as an article of belief, be greatly abused, the admission of it may be allowed to have this advantage, that it may, if properly felt, be a stimulus to very strong and strenuous practical effort. "He can conquer, who believes he can;" much more, he can conquer, who believes he must. Nothing is so important to secure victory and success in any labour, as a firm faith on the part of the individual that he shall succeed; this, instead of leading him to relax his efforts, to be careless or negligent, inspires him to put forth his utmost powers with such a spirit of buoyancy and hope, as carries him through, and makes, as it were, the prophecy that spoke within him, in his internal confidence, to fulfil itself.

It is thus, I think, that the belief of the security of the Church may operate upon those who hope that they belong to it. The very idea that they are to be kept and preserved as heirs of "the inheritance of the saints in light," if properly felt, will induce and help them to resist temptation, to put off the works of darkness, to "be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might," to endeavour to fulfil all righteousness, and thus to seize and lay hold of, with a firm hand, that eternal life, which they feel confident is destined to be theirs. Where, on the other hand, there is doubt and fear of ultimate success, or disbelief of its positive certainty; there, from this very circumstance, there may come to be that hopelessness of the heart which paralyzes the hand, extinguishes energy, renders the individual an easy prey to the assaults of temptation, and induces failure from the prevalence of the fear of it—the prophecy of fear, like the prophecy of faith fulfilling itself. "If children, then hears—heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ, if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together;" the firm persuasion of being thus glorified in consequence of their joint heirship, I can easily imagine, may brace up the minds of believers to any suffering, warfare, or sorrow—the persuasion of success strengthening them to succeed.

3. But in the third place, independently of (or additional to) this consideration, the subject suggests many obligations and motives to obedience.

To be, by outward profession and inward hope, a child and heir of God, is a thought pregnant with inducement and stimulus to holiness. The object of worship, viewed under any aspect, necessarily becomes the standard of virtue; but when contemplated in the parental relation, the most affecting and tender considerations come in aid of our imitation and resemblance. Hence such exhortations as these—"Come out from amongst them, and be ye separate, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you, and be a Father to you, saith the Lord Almighty." "Having, therefore, such promises, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and of spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." "Be imitators of God, as dear children." "Be ye holy, for I am holy." The idea of being so intimately related to infinite excellence, is adapted to excite and inflame a sacred ambition to live worthy of so distinguished a privilege. The child of any individual eminent for virtue, is regarded as of a base and grovelling nature, if he lives insensible to the attraction of such an influence. The heir to honourable title, exalted rank, and splendid patrimony, if he feels as he ought to feel, will be anxious to act in correspondence with his condition—to associate with no company, and to contract no habits, inconsistent with his animating expectations. It is looked for by the world, that the great and dignified should not act in a way unbecoming their dignity. Such motives, by way of natural consequence,

should be felt to press on the conscience and the affections of those, who are the sons and the heirs of God. The inheritance, too, to which they are looking forward, is one which nothing can prepare them to enjoy, but a present conformity to the Divine image ; the glory to be revealed, is a glory, of the elements of which they must now be partakers, in the virtues of a renovated mind, and the habits of a holy character. A child is expected to possess some resemblance to its parents in appearance and disposition ; and one adopted into a family, to catch something of the manners and habits of the household ; while the character of an elder brother frequently affects and moulds the rest. All these considerations admit easily of a direct application to the professed children of our heavenly Father ; who, "if children, are then heirs—heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ."

4. In conclusion : the subject in the last place, affords encouragement to all anxious and earnest men, who are seriously inquiring for and seeking after God. However distinguished the privileges and the character of those who are the members of the Divine family, there was a time when they did not belong to it, and when some of them, perhaps, were the veriest slaves of iniquity and corruption." "By the grace of God, they are what they are." What that grace did for them, it can do for others. The words of the apostle might be addressed to the whole of the redeemed in earth and heaven—"Ye are all the children of God, by faith in Jesus Christ." It was thus that they passed "from darkness to light"—from death to life—from slavery to sonship—from being children of wrath and heirs of hell, to the hope & the enjoyment of the heavenly inheritance. With humble penitence, and sincere faith,—with entire and exclusive dependence on his sacrifice and work, they "received Jesus Christ ;" and "to as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them who believed on his name." The cross of Christ is, at this moment, "the power of God unto salvation," as it has ever been ; and the regenerating Spirit is as present with the Word as in the first age, and as ready to renew and sanctify, if not repelled by hardened contempt, or impenitent resistance. There is not a sinner, in his sins, however numerous or aggravated they may be, but may become, by repentance and faith, pardoned and saved—a child of God, by adoption, and grace, the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost. Men, as men, are not in this state ; all who are so, had to enter into it from the condition in which the sinner at present stands. The door which admitted them, is open for others ; and there is one standing at that door, crying to all that have ears to hear—"Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out,"—whosoever will approach, I will by no means close the door against him. The very object of the gospel, the aim and purpose of the Lord's death, the travail and labour (if I may so speak,) of his life in heaven, the end to be achieved by the ministry of the word, and the means of grace, all merge and terminate in this—to change rebels into obedient children, and thus to enlarge the family of God, and to accomplish the number of his elect. It is the pleasure of Jehovah to see this prosper, in the world, the satisfaction of Christ, the joy of angels, the happiness of the church, "The Spirit and the Bride say, come ; and let him that heareth say, come ; and let him that is athirst, come ; and whosoever will, let him come, and take of the waters of life freely." "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." Do this, and "ye shall receive the adoption of sons." It is the will of God that ye should do this, and thus enter into the privileges of his children. He "having raised up his Son Jesus, has sent him to bless you, in turning every one of you away from his iniquities."

May God mercifully shed upon us all a copious supply of the converting grace, and the sanctifying Spirit of Jesus Christ, that those who are in their sins may become children ; and that those who are children, may more conformed to the image of the Father, may walk more worthy of the high vocation wherewith they are called, and be more manifestly, in conversation and conduct, "heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ."

THE ULTIMATE MORAL PURPOSE OF CHRISTIANITY.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY EVENING, JULY 20, 1851,

BY THE REV. H. ALLON,

AT EXETER HALL.

"As we have borne the image of the earthly, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly." —
1 Cor. xv. 49.

You must often have remarked the striking parallel which in this context, as also in the Epistle to the Romans, the apostle institutes between Adam and Christ. Here it is constructed for the special purpose of establishing and illustrating the doctrine of the resurrection of the body. But over and above this specific application of it, it is pregnant with grand and momentous teaching. It separates from the mass of mankind, two individuals, Adam and Jesus, as unique and representative men, the fountains of the two great streams of moral good and evil, that divide our race. They are represented as sustaining to their respective seeds a peculiar and federal headship; Adam to his natural, and Christ to his spiritual offspring. And in this character they stand alone, the only two representative men that the world has seen, responsible by their moral conduct, not only for their own individual standing and felicity, but also for those of all their posterity.

Upon the obedience of the first Adam depended the perpetual life of his offspring; the life of the body which is physical immortality, and the life of the soul which is spiritual holiness. When, therefore, he transgressed, his instant sentence was a sentence of death; "dying, thou shalt die"; and from that moment his body became mortal, and his soul was "dead in trespasses and sins." And both these consequences he entailed upon his posterity; in respect both of body and of soul it holds true that "in Adam all die."

If, in these respects, therefore, man is to be restored, there needs a "second man," another federal head, upon whose obedience should a second time be suspended sovereign blessings for the race; one who, if faithful, should remedy the evils entailed by the first, re-animate the mortal body, regenerate the spiritual soul.

"The second man is the Lord from heaven." In marvellous mercy and grace he is divinely constituted a second covenant head; transcending the first man, not only because he was faithful where Adam had failed, but because he was faithful with incalculably more to achieve; not only had he the simple requirement of holiness to keep, he had the former violation of it to remedy; he had not only as the first Adam, physical and moral life to *perpetuate*, he had them to restore—for the threatening had become an experience; death had befallen man, as physical corruption it had preyed upon his body, as moral corruption it had preyed upon his soul. And the second man had the dust to re-animate and the soul to renew. Hence, while "the first Adam" was simply "a living soul," a being possessed of physical and moral life, "the last Adam" was made a quickening spirit," a life-giver to the dead. Standing over this twofold grave of humanity, he proclaimed himself "the resurrection and the life." Hence he could not be a common descendant of the first Adam, "that which is born of the flesh is flesh." "As is the earthly, such are they also who are earthly." He must be constituted and introduced a new type of humanity; if none but a perfect, can be a representative man, then may we see the reason why the "second man" should be "the Lord from heaven." Now, upon these two great ideas the entire moral economy of the gospel hinges; from the first Adam, as from a fountain, all the *sinfulness* of humanity issues; and from the second, in like manner, all its holiness. "All religion," says Pascal, "is in Adam and Christ." And these in their proper order—"that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth, earthly; the second man is the Lord from heaven. As is the earthly, such are they also that are earthly: and as is the heavenly, such are they that are heavenly.

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And as we have borne the image of the earthly, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly."

As we have intimated, however, the transformation which the text affirms is limited to the resurrection of the body, simply because this is the requirement and limitation of the apostle's argument—that "our bodies shall be made like to Christ's glorious body." You must not, therefore, hold him responsible for further meaning than this. This particular argument, however, may fairly suggest to us theological truth of a more extended, and even more important character, especially as in the epistle to the Romans it is so applied by Paul himself. For it is true of more things, than of the physical body, that they are to undergo a transformation, from "the image of the earthly," to "the image of the heavenly." We shall venture therefore to generalize the argument which the apostle here specifically applies to the resurrection of the body, and apply it to the great moral transformations which Christianity is to accomplish within us. Of the soul as well as of the body it may be affirmed that, "As we have borne the image of the earthly, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly." And thus we get as the theme of our discourse—the ultimate moral purpose for which the gospel of Christ is given to us.

I. And first, we are reminded of the fact, that prior to the transformations of Christianity, we are in a moral condition that may fitly be designated, "the image of the earthly." Our course of illustration here, had we space for pursuing it, would be something like this—

First, it would be obvious for us to inquire into the origin of a condition of melancholy. And intuitively we should feel, that a moral condition, that could be truly described as "the image of the earthly," could not have been the condition of our primitive creation; a holy God could never create a moral being that was by nature unholy. And in corroboration of this instinctive supposition, we should find the sacred record declaring, that God did actually "create man in his own image." And on inquiry into the meaning of this, we should have found, that the only image of God which a creature can bear, is that of moral likeness—that God therefore created man in his own moral likeness, made him a holy being, even as he himself was holy. And we should have found this holiness to have been probably constituted, as is the holiness of every moral being, by the indwelling of God's Holy Spirit. Then the question would necessarily have followed—if such were man's primitive creation, how came he to fall from it? how came we to lose "the image of the heavenly" in which he was created? And here we should, probably, have found that his sin entailed the judicial withdrawal of the indwelling spirit, and its withholdment from all his posterity, leaving him in a condition of moral depravity or death; and thus we should have found ourselves entertaining the profound and difficult question of the fall. How it was that Adam fell, and that all his posterity fell in him? Then the still further inquiry would have presented itself—What is our actual condition as thus fallen, the condition here described as "the image of the earthly"? What are its characteristics and elements? Wherein does it consist? And here we should have found that the sentence of the transgression which reduced us to this condition, being a sentence of death, we had lost our proper physical, and our proper spiritual life; the immortal life of the body, and the moral or spiritual life of the soul.

These are the profound and difficult questions manifestly lying upon the threshold of our proper theme, but as manifestly impracticable for a subordinate or collective investigation here. Even the little that I had purposed to say concerning them, I must at some risk of incoherence omit; and assuming the fact, that through the fall our present moral image is "the image of the earthly," proceed

II. Secondly, to the positive affirmation of the text, which is, that this "image of the earthly," the sad reverse of man's primitive holiness and catastrophe of his sin, shall itself be superseded by a recovered and transcendent condition of being, here designated, "the image of the heavenly." "As we have borne the image of the earthly, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly." And this in respect both of soul and body.

I. We shall bear "the image of the heavenly" in the moral, renewal, and sanctification of the soul.

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This then implies—

First, that our nature is capable of such renewal; and, Secondly, that means for effecting it have been mercifully provided.

(1). If it be affirmed concerning us in respect of our moral nature, that we who "have borne the image of the earthly, shall also bear the image of the heavenly," then it is implied, that whatever may have been the damage and disaster of sin, it has not so affected human nature, as to render it incapable of such renewal.

If our conception of the fall be correct, then sin has not destroyed, or naturally disabled any part of man's moral constitution; it has only given to it an *unholiness*. The dwelling of the Holy Spirit in Adam, was no more essential to his proper *spiritual nature*, than it is to that of regenerate men now. It was essential only to the *holy character* of that nature; without the indwelling spirit, the *spiritual nature* would have been equally there—there in all its integrity; but its *character* would have been utterly unholiness. His fall therefore produced no change in man's moral constitution, but only in his moral *character*; through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, his moral nature was holy, through its judicial withdrawal, it became unholiness, and this I take it is the damage that the soul sustained through the fall. Its essential *nature* remains the same, in all the proper and primitive sense of the term, it is soul still, but its character has become entirely and utterly unholiness.

But because *it is* soul still, is it capable of restoration and moral renewal. The will that now is inclined only to rebellion may come to be inclined only to obedience. The affections that now hate God and holiness may come to love them; those who have hitherto been sinful may come to be pure; the Holy Spirit may be recomunicated, and spiritual life and purity again may characterize the moral man. And if it be declared concerning us as a privilege, that we shall "bear the image of the heavenly," and enjoined upon us as a duty, that we "be imitators of God as dear children," then is there manifestly supposed a capacity or susceptibility of it; that there is in us, so to speak, material out of which the Divine image may be fashioned. And this is throughout the Scripture doctrine of human nature, that radically and in itself it is a Divine thing, that its loss is not of its primitive *moral nature*, but of its primitive *moral character*; that, indeed, man as he now is, is in a lapsed and unnatural state; that he has fallen into a great gulph never intended for his occupancy; a chasm that by the moral earthquake of the fall, has come to separate two great heights of humanity, that, viz., from which he has fallen, the "image of God" in which he was created, and that to which he may be restored—"the image of the heavenly" which he is to bear. The first constituted by the primitive indwelling of the Holy Spirit, which dwelt in man's heart as in a temple, and sanctified it as a source whence all his life should flow. The second to be constituted by the recomunicated Spirit, regenerating and sanctifying the fallen heart, and perfecting his work in it, in the reproduction of the Divine image, restored in all its symmetry of outline and transcendancy of beauty.

Between these two conditions of the past and of the future, human nature, now lies a fallen and dishonoured thing, "the image of the earthly," imprinted upon its heavenly material. But we see in this, the antecedents and possible processes whereby "the image of the heavenly" may be restored; though fallen, the soul has yet a nature kindred to that of its Creator.

In proof of this we might call up before us one by one, the essential elements of which man's moral nature palpably consists, and the manifest capabilities by which it is distinguished.

Take for instance his inerradicable consciousness of right and wrong. Whichever you find man, you find him making the distinction; he may mistake the things that he so designates—he may call good evil, and evil good—whether he call the right things good or not, will depend upon his *religious knowledge*; but to call some things good, and some other things evil, is an instinct of his soul, proving uncontestedly its essential moral nature, and therefore its capability of being morally holy.

Or take again, man's free, intelligent, and controlling will; his unfettered moral agency, entertaining whatever moral affection, and doing whatever moral actions may seem good to him.

Hence his capability of being wrought upon by the Holy Spirit, whose

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agency is a purely moral or persuasive influence ; you cannot conceive a moral nature being moved by force, the very ideas of spirit and coercion are mutually destructive. It is of the essential nature of spirit that it should be free; take away the freedom and you destroy the spirituality, that is, you destroy all possibility of virtue ; hence the persuasive influences of the Holy Spirit appeal to man's free and intelligent will, we are "made willing in the day of his power," we come to have sympathy with God and goodness, and become "imitators of God as dear children."

But leaving these and other similar proofs of divine capacity, which we may recognize in human nature, let me specify as proof that we are capable of bearing "the image of the heavenly," the striking fact, that *we are capable of forming conceptions of God*. We entertain conceptions of the divine nature, we put together ideas, under the august name of God, ideas of infinite perfection and purity, and when we have formed the conception, we instinctively yearn to be ourselves assimilated to it. And whence do such conceptions come, but from the consciousness of our own spirits, enlightened and rectified by the teachings of revelation ? The very idea of God, sublime and awful as it is, is but the self-consciousness of our own spiritual nature purified and enlarged to infinity. All the elements of our divine conception are fetched out of our own human souls. We call God "the father of lights," infinite in knowledge and wisdom ; but what is this but the idea of human wisdom, expanded and elevated above all error and imperfection, and extended to all possible truth. We call God infinitely good, but we comprehend the perfect attribute in him through its imperfect development in ourselves. And so it is with the divine holiness, and justice, and truth, they are of the same essential nature as the corresponding qualities in ourselves ; they are indeed moral essences, and moral essences are identical in kind, in whatever moral being they are found.

My own moral nature, therefore, interprets to me the moral nature of God. I can understand him only through the consciousness within me of what is like him. I get the conception of his infinite excellencies, through their finite existence in myself. I enlarge and purify them to infinity, and that I call God. Without this moral consciousness, indeed, I could not be the subject of religion at all. Had I not this moral sympathy with God, this identity of moral nature, I should be no more capable of religion than a brute. Possessing it, however perverted and polluted it may be, I am capable of being like God, capable of bearing the "image of the heavenly." Because, therefore, I am not a creature of mere bone and sinew; because I am not merely strong as the lion, and cunning as the serpent; because I have a moral nature and a moral consciousness, therefore am I capable of this glorious Godlikeness.

Nay, is there not in that mysterious part of us which we call soul, something that if not infinity itself, is nearest like to it. If the next thing to infinity, be the capability of unlimited attainment, then who shall fix limits to the attainments of the soul? Yea, does not the very conception of infinity itself attest a nature that cannot be limited? Why do we conceive of it, but because our consciousness tells us of yearnings and wants that demand it for their satisfaction. Oh! does not this human soul of ours, in all its higher attributes and actions, in its boundlessness of its aspirings, in the vague vastness of its conceptions, in its yearnings after an unlimited and unknown good, in its conception and coveting of immortality, does not all this attest, if not an infinity, yet something nearly allied to it? Are there not in this soul of mine, thoughts of unutterable meaning, unfathomable depths of feeling, immovable strength of moral principle, pieties of infinite rapture, and communings and joys of unspeakable depth and fulness? Is it not always bursting its bounds, thirsting after wider and still wider knowledge, hastening to a satisfaction ever future to it, and thus evermore attesting that its true end and aim is an unbounded good? Verily the infinity of God hath its reflection in human souls, and therefore is it that we are capable of bearing "the image of the heavenly," and that there is distinction and pre-eminence in the wondrous saying, "So God created man in his own image."

Again, it was in human nature that the divine Son was incarnated—"he took not on him the nature of angels." "He that sanctifieth and they that are sanctified are all of one." "The word was made flesh." A nature, therefore, which *he could* assume must necessarily be capable of a perfect holiness.

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Wherever, therefore, he beheld it, he treated it with respect, sought to elevate it in its purity, wept over it in its sin, died for it in its guilt. In his own person he made it Godlike, he realized its primal type—"He was holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners." He was "the holy child Jesus." The man in whom "the prince of this world could find nothing;" whom his enemies could "not convince of sin;" whom the traitor acknowledged to be "innocent; and in whom his judge could "find no fault." A nature is it capable of the divine image, or the divine Son could not have been incarnate in it.

It is in human nature, moreover, that the Holy Spirit dwells in, as a temple; he finds it indeed a temple overthrown, a temple of God in ruins. But upon capitol and pillar, and frieze and foundation, the stamp and inscription of divinity are seen, only broken and defaced, and he comes to readyf and reinhabit it, and to consecrate it again to God. "Know ye not that your bodies are the temple of the Holy Ghost who dwelleth in you."

And finally here, it is with our proper human nature that God assumes the paternal relationship so frequently affirmed and emphatically dwelt upon in the New Testament. "Now are we the sons of God." A designation that has its origin in, and is suggestive of resemblance, we are "imitators of God as dear children. And singularly beautiful and wondrous is it, how God projects and insists upon the proper fatherhood of his people. The whole economy takes its character of love and of privilege from this relationship; our worship is to be addressed to "our Father who is in heaven." It is the privilege conferred upon "as many as receive Christ;" "That they should be called the sons of God." It is "the manner of love that he has bestowed upon us." Nor is it a mere hyperbolical expression for exalted privilege; the process is explained to us—*legally* we are adopted into the status of children—*morally* we are regenerated into the nature of children, "begotten again by the Holy Spirit" to the character of sons: "That which is born of the Spirit is spirit." Because, therefore, we can thus be made sons, we are capable of bearing "the image of the heavenly."

I am aware that there are some who demur to such representations of the dignity of human nature, and who tell us that such promises as that of the text are not to be taken in any literal sense, but that they are a bold, figurative mode of affirming a condition of exalted excellency and felicity. God, it is contended, is a being so utterly unapproachable, that in no literal sense at all can I be said to bear his image; and that a true religion will manifest itself in discoveries and confessions of unworthiness, rather than in imaginations and congratulations of excellence; and that therefore to indulge in the latter is in the highest degree perilous, and contrary to the suppositions and teachings of revelation.

But let it be remembered, that the acknowledgments of worthlessness which religion constrains are solely acknowledgments of sin, and that sin is the disease and disaster of human nature, and not its essential condition; exempt from sin (its accident and not its attribute) humanity is a divine thing, the most glorious production perhaps of the Creator's hand, transcending in its moral grandeur all other creations. Everywhere in the gospel we meet testimonies to its dignity. Its entire burden is the expression of an infinite concern for human salvation; it deems no methods too vast for its deliverance, no price too costly for its purchase, no destiny too high for its aspiration. It tells me that this soul of mine is of more worth than the whole world.

"Worlds heaped on worlds, one soul outweighs them all."

It assumes throughout my capability of the divine fellowship and image to which it seeks to raise me. I am to be "perfect even as my Father who is in heaven is perfect;" and all its precepts and promises imply a sublime capacity in me for attaining to this perfection.

Hence the religion of Christ teaches man not to despond, but to aspire; not to look downwards, but upwards; not to think meanly of his nature, but loftily. If it remind him of his sin, it is that he may put it away; if it tell him of his depravity, it is only that it may urge him to seek "the renewing of the Holy Ghost;" its very essence is elevating, because it is purifying; it urges him to the noblest aims and fills him with the loftiest anticipations. It tells him that he shall be like his Lord, for he shall "see him as he is;" and it enjoins upon

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him the earnest entertainment of "this hope," that he may "purify himself even as Christ is pure." The loftiest views of human nature, indeed, are presupposed by all the distinctive doctrines of the Christian system. That must be a glorious thing which could so greatly fall, and for the redemption of which such a price has been paid, and for the renewal of which such an agent has been provided, and for the moral consummation of which such a destiny is prepared. Think meanly as you will, therefore, of the disaster and disease of human nature, vituperate against its sin, mourn over its fall, be ashamed for its degradation, confess its treachery and guilt; but remember that all this is disease, and perversion, and accident; it is neither the nature nor the essence of humanity. Yea, from the very greatness of the evil that has befallen it, we may infer the greatness of its nature; a great sin implies a great capacity; Satan is a Lucifer fallen; the rest are lesser fiends, because they were lesser angels. And we distinguish, therefore, between that nature itself and its fallen condition, between its essence and its accident; of the former we cannot conceive too highly, of the latter we cannot think too mournfully. This, then, is one of the things implied in the assurance that "we shall bear the image of the heavenly," that we have a nature capable of the transformation.

(2.) The other is, that means for effecting such transformation have been graciously and mercifully provided.

And this introduces us to an exposition of the entire gospel. It leads us to a recognition.

First, Of its ultimate and paramount *purpose*, in relation to us; and,

Secondly, Of the specific adaptation of it for the accomplishment of that purpose.

First, That we may "bear the image of the heavenly" is the supreme *purpose* of the gospel. The grand, and indeed the sole purpose of God in providing for us an atonement, and in giving to us a revelation of it, is to effect in us such moral transformation. The attainment of Godlikeness is the end of all moral being, and therefore of all religion. For this, therefore, the atonement, as well as the agency of the Holy Spirit, which it secures is designed. We are justified by the one *in order to* our sanctification by the other. The first and great idea of the gospel is forgiveness, but the second, and still greater idea, is moral renewal. Its historical position is between "the image of the earthly" lost, and the "image of the heavenly" gained; and its mission is to accomplish the latter. It finds man everywhere in degeneracy and debasement, bearing the "image of the earthly;" and its simple purpose is to lift him to purity and dignity, to transform him into "the image of the heavenly." All God's purposes in redemption are accomplished in this; the atonement finds all its issue, Christ all his reward, the church all its mission, God all his glory, and heaven all its joy; not in the mere pardon of human sin, which is but the preliminary blessing of the atonement, but in the renewal of human nature which is its consummate issue. The noblest and ultimate achievement of Christianity is to make us "partakers of the divine nature," to fashion us in all the symmetry of its form and minuteness of its beauty, according to "the image of the heavenly." The perfection of the Redeemer's work is to "save his people from their sins." All the purposes of eternity therefore, all the influences of Calvary, all the workings of the Spirit, all the utterances of revelation, and all the agencies of preaching aim ultimately at this, at engaging men's aspirations and efforts in the moral purification of their souls. This is the one pervading idea and spirit of the New Testament, that we become "imitators of God as dear children," "partakers of the divine nature," "renewed after the image of him who created us," conformed to him in every part of our nature, our moral estimates to him, which will be knowing the truth; our moral purposes to him, which will be willing the right; and our moral character to him, which will be attaining to the holy.

To this, therefore, Christianity solely addresses itself; it seeks no other end, plies no other urgency; it meddles not with social conditions, or secular interests, or external elements of good; whether it find man rich or poor, elevated or obscure, socially free or socially enslaved; there it leaves him, and seeks solely the renewal of his inward nature. Its great prerogative is to make men holy, everything else it leaves to the natural issues of holiness. Revealing the true means of happiness and dignity, under every condition, it so far makes it

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possessors independent of outward circumstances. "It is the victory which overcometh the world." It confers a spiritual, and therefore an unassailable good; a moral, and therefore an inviolable glory; a good, and a glory constituted by the "image of the heavenly;" and which enable its possessor to rise superior to all external vicissitudes, and elevate him above all other distinctions.

And then, great and glorious as the realization of this great purpose of Christianity is here, it is but an earnest of its ultimate and perfect consummation in the life to come. "It doth not yet appear what we shall be." The perfect "image of the heavenly" is a portraiture of the future life. Even to the Christian of most eminent degree the text must read as a promise. "He has not yet attained, neither is already perfect." The spiritual soul in its ultimate perfections and felicities can find its appropriate sphere of manifestation only amid "the sons of God." Its affinities are with the future and spiritual, rather than with the present and physical; these only cumber and clasp it—it "groans, being burdened;" it bears "the image of the heavenly," but in faint outline and incipient degree; its rudiments are but faintly traced upon the newly-born soul—"shadows, clouds, and darkness rest upon it;" its grandeur and glory cannot be *fully* manifested or attained until we enter heaven. Laden with infirmity it will enter the valley and shadow of death, but there it will leave "that which hindereth," and emerge from its darkness an emancipated spirit; then shall we be perfectly like him, "for we shall see him as he is." Like him in moral purity and beauty, the Divine image perfectly produced, our creature holiness "without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing." Sin, the great deformity of our nature, destroyed; the soul which it had marred, recreated; the corruptions of the flesh, the unspiritualness of the world, the temptations of the devil, left behind the stamp and the brand perfectly obliterated; "the earthly" totally effaced, "the heavenly" perfectly produced, the soul perfected in celestial purity, and moulded into celestial beauty.

And yet is it important to reiterate, that this will only be *the perfecting of a process already commenced*. The holiness of heaven is not a transformation effected by death, or by the simple passage of the soul, out of time into eternity. It is simply the perfecting of existing spiritual character, by removing its limitations, and soliciting it to a full development. It is the filling up of existing outline; the distinction and the character *now* obtain—"Now are we the sons of God," although "it doth not appear what we shall be." It only awaits its unfolding; the "meetness for the inheritance" is now going on; it will only be its completion. The idea of death, indeed, is negative rather than positive; death can communicate nothing to the spirit, it can only take away. Death, therefore, cannot be conceived of as conferring holiness; it will but disencumber us of the solicitudes of sin; it is the falling off of sense, which unlawfully craves; the shutting out of the world, which voluptuously solicits; the excluding of Satan, who assiduously tempts. It is simply manumission and exemption from every cause and occasion of evil. The *positive* holiness of the soul can receive no augment by death; the first moment in heaven, save for the disenchantment of "that which hindered," will be like the last moment on earth; and thence shall we start a new and glorious career of rapid and eminent acquisition, maturing in holiness still, even through eternity. So, that if at all the believer must, *on earth*, bear the incipient "image of the heavenly," even while yet he has not wholly effaced "the image of the earthly." His sanctification, indeed, is a process with both "a putting off the old man with his deeds, and a putting on the new man which, after God, is created in righteousness and true holiness." A constant effacing of the old stamp, until its outlines become dim, and altogether disappear, and a constant deepening of the regenerate stamp, until its image become perfect in every part, and indelible in every feature.

Here, therefore, we must recognize "the good work begun in us." The upshootings and outburstings of seminal holiness. The germ and element of all heavenly character is already in the regenerate heart. The infant *features* are there, of that glorious maturity; the incipient *love* is there, which in heaven shall flame as the seraph's; and *holiness*, which in heaven shall be without taint; and *obedience*, which in heaven shall be without grudging; and *felicity*, that in heaven shall be without stint. Grace here is but the budding of heavenly glory.

"The men of grace have found
Glory begun below."

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The only difference is, that there it will be perfected—"There entereth not anything that defileth." "They have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." "They are as the angels of God." "That which is in part, is done away; and that which is perfect, is come." Every sin-mark removed, and holiness within us and about us, as an ineffable glory. Every feature of the Divine image perfect, and evermore brightening amid the purities of heaven, and beneath the transforming vision of God. "We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is."

Secondly, The adaptation of Christianity to accomplish this its supreme purpose hardly needs to be insisted upon; *the adaptation of all its parts as a revealed system of theology*, and the adaptation of *all its agencies as a means of practical religion*.

Do you take *its revealed doctrines*? Throughout they are according to godliness, an expression of the divine holiness, a powerful constraint of ours. Do you take *its revealed precepts*? They constitute the most elevated and spiritual morality that the world has seen, demanding of us not a mere outward conformity to virtue, but an inward and radical love for it.

Do you take *its revealed promises*? They inspire us with anticipations whose necessary influence is eminently and urgently sanctifying; "every man having these hopes within him purifieth himself, even as Christ is pure;" "exceeding great and precious promises are given to us, that by these we may be made partakers of the divine nature."

Such is the influence of Christianity as a revealed system of theology. Now look at the *agencies that it employs as a religion*; every part and every influence of it is adjusted and exerted solely for our holiness.

First, We have the personal example of Christ, the prolonged incarnation of the divine Son. That the precept and the promise might be demonstrated as practicable; that the abstract conception of the divine image might become tangible and real, "the word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth," that he might exhibit its possibilities of holiness, Christ mysteriously took upon him the conditions of our common humanity. He lived a human life, "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners." "He did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth." And in all this, "he left us an example that we should walk in his steps." And this, doubtless, was the prime reason of his protracted incarnation. The essential purposes of his atonement might have been accomplished in a very brief space; but he lived an average human life, that he might have occasion to exemplify the chief possibilities of human virtue and grace, that for the first time the Creator's ideal of humanity might be realized, that he might be the incarnate image of the heavenly, "the second man, the Lord from heaven." He rescued precepts and promises like the text, therefore, from that vague and indefinite sense of unlimited and unattainable excellence which we generally associate with the idea of divinity. The model is before us, the character determined, the excellency embodied; our humanity is to be conformed to the humanity of Christ, and that is the perfect "image of the heavenly."

Need we speak of the holy influences exerted by *his death*. How the love of Christ constraineth us. How we are "conformed to his death," to the moral principles upon which it proceeded, to the moral ends which it pursued. How through his cross we are "crucified unto the world and the world unto us."

Or of the *agency of the Holy Spirit*, whose pre-eminent work it is to "renew us after the image of him who created us," by communicating to us and nurturing within us spiritual life; the moment of his advent to the soul we call conviction; the first effect of his presence there we call regeneration, whereby "old things are made to pass away, and all things become new." The primitive and holy affections that constitute Godlikeness are restored; sin "becomes exceeding sinful;" its hateful character, its degrading influence, its ruinous tendencies, are intensely felt. The man mourns over it with a bitter mourning. He "smites upon his breast," in its consciousness, "God be merciful to me, sinner." He strives against it as a power, wars against it as a rebellious "law in his members," grapples with it as an antagonist, loathes it as a pestilence, mourns over it as a blight and a destruction of all that he deems most precious in his religious progress, his holy peace, his spiritual evidence, his heavenly aspira-

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rations ; and he pours out his soul in anguish—"O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death." And thus *deploring* the evil of sin, he seeks its extirpation, though "the image of the earthly" be not wholly stamped out, the image of the heavenly is unequivocally stamped in. He has the mind of Christ, and is being transformed "into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."

And this we need hardly add, is the sole design of the *Christian church and ministry*, "to present every man morally perfect in Christ Jesus."

2. And then, lastly, It is not the soul alone that is to undergo such marvellous transformation. We mentioned as his equal forfeiture in the fall, man's physical immortality. "Dust thou art, and to dust thou shalt return." And because of this, his origin and doom, his image is fitly called, "the image of the earthly." Whatever might have been the immortal character or condition of the body, had man never sinned, it is certain that it would not have died. "Sin entered into the world and death by sin, and so death passed upon all for that all men have sinned." "In Adam all die." And solemn is this thought of even physical death. Even in the strong and heavenly light of gospel immortality it is a serious thing to die, for death is a judicial sentence, the divine penalty of sin. It is the termination of a solemn condition of being, it is our disappearance from amongst men, it is our final separation from all earthly associations and possibilities, it is the end of our moral probation, the close of a pregnant responsibility, the boundary of a condition in which eternal destinies are shaped and adjusted to issues of immutable weal or woe. An event, too, to which we are momentarily exposed, that may befall us in the midst of unsuspecting life and hope. "We know neither the day nor the hour when the Son of man cometh."

Considerations these which forbid us to think lightly of death, which compel us to think of it otherwise than of the mere fall and mouldering of a carcass. In itself it may be a trivial thing, the dislocation of a mechanism of animated clay, but it lets forth the soul to wander through eternity.

And more literally here than in spiritual damage of the soul may we realize the apostle's description of the condition to which sin has reduced us, "the image of the earthly." It is not a mere metaphor for a moral conception, it is a physical condition palpable to our sense. In literal reality our eyes behold it, the mortal impress of corruption, the earthly returning to its earth, the face of beauty turning pale, the sinew of strength becoming feeble, the eye of intelligence waxing dim, the susceptibility of sense gradually beumbed, the godlike form fallen into the rigidity and coldness and dissolution of death. No spectacle appals like this. It is the utterest sense of dissolution, the consciousness of catastrophe and change, of some noble thing departed. It is more than inanimation, a positive terror sits enthroned upon it. It is not mere lifelessness, as we see it in a statue—it is death in the corpse. There is the thrilling sense of life extinct, the statue never lived, the marble was never vital, blood never coursed through its veins, pulse never thrrobbed in its members, soul never dwelt within it, nothing has departed, no spirit has been yielded up.

But here is life conquered, the pulse has *ceased* to beat, the heart has been arrested in its sway, the members have forgotten their office, "the silver cord is loosed," "the golden bowl is broken." Death reigns where life once was; it has "broken into the house of life," it fills the habitation of the life that it has destroyed, it has utterly dispossessed the soul; and from its invasion there is no defence, from its power there is no appeal; its warfare knows no defeat, its dominion no exception; "there is no discharge in that war." Methuselah must lay him down to die; Rachel must "weep for her children, because they are not," and she, herself, must be "buried in the way to Ephrath;" the patriarch must purchase his Maepelah; the Arimathean build his "sepulchre" in his garden; Joshua must "go the way of all the earth;" Omri must "reign in Tibni's stead;" the prophet "must yield up the ghost;" the apostle make himself "ready to be offered up;" the tongue of the Psalmist must lie still; the pen of the Apocalypse fall. Character makes no distinction, save to change the sepulchre into a cemetery; the rich man dies in his palace, Lazarus dies at his gate. Occupation ensures no favour, devotion must cease its prayer, beneficence must stay its foot, Dorcas must leave her garments, Stephen his ministry. Whatever the altar, its flame must be quenched; whatever the

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temple, it must fall into ruins; universally is "the image of the earthly the image of death."

Here, then, again the promise greets us. The grave must hear other words and give forth other echoes than "dust to dust." It listened when "Lazarus came forth" to *words of life*. "The second man, the Lord from heaven," proclaimed himself over the brink of it, "the resurrection and the life." "If Adam all die, in Christ shall all be made alive." "If we believe that Jesus died and rose again, then they also who sleep in Jesus will God bring with him." And in proof and earnest of this Christ himself arose from the dead, became "the first fruits of them that slept;" from his own humanity he shook off the dishonours of the grave. And after having fasted forty days, presented himself to his disciples in all the glory of a new and immortal life, palpably free from all human infirmity, and radiant with all the freshness and felicity of a deathless being, invulnerable to all shafts of mortality—he ascended upon high leading captivity captive, the "evidence and first fruits of the resurrection from the dead. And so shall it be with those who 'sleep in Jesus.'" We shall bear also *this* "image of the heavenly," for "he shall change our vile bodies, and make them like to his own glorious body." "This corruptible must put on incorruption; this mortal immortality. Thus it is in the resurrection from the dead; it is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: it is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: it is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body." Such "honour have all the saints." "As we have borne the image of the earthly, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly."

But here again we verily know not what we thus affirm; the transcendence of this transformation also surpasses our conception. It is true of the spiritual body as it is of the spiritual soul, that "it doth not yet appear what we shall be." Its simplest idea, even exemption from death, we can hardly realize; the full force and meaning of that wondrous saying—"Neither shall they die any more." For now we are conversant only with death, mortally compasses us on every side, all things are its emblems, the earth is full of its teachings, we see it on every hand, we feel it in every nerve, we fear it in every agency. We can hardly therefore, conceive of a condition that shall be simply deathless, and not at all of that marvellous transformation, which extracting the qualities of "the natural body," shall constitute this tabernacle of the soul some wondrous thing, which the apostle designates "a spiritual body."

And yet how rapturous to think of the resurrection state, even as we can conceive of it; to be transformed and glorified in our perfect manhood; its great constituents of body and soul, both there and perfected; the body without mortality or blemish, the soul without sin; to stand complete, a man according to the Creator's ideal of that master-piece of creation, to be in heaven, peopled not with angels merely but with men; and to be in his presence, to behold his glory, to bear his likeness, to see the King in his beauty, to wait, and wonder, and worship ever around his throne. Nor is the anticipation necessarily distant; how possible the imminent transition! How thin the severing veil! How short the actual passage! How rapid the translation! Were the interval the most lingering death, the longest lifetime, ages of purgatorial purifying, it would afford no space proportionate to the mighty change, and "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye," it may be accomplished;—the very word articulated on earth, may echo in heaven.

Oh! to stand with these gospel revealings and anticipations by the bed of a dying saint, to watch the ebbing tide of mortal life, to count its few and feeble waves, to mark the changing countenance, becoming moment by moment more ethereal and transparent, until through the wasting and parting tabernacle, the soul even ere liberated, obtains glimpses of the spiritual concealed from our grosser sense. And the earthly form is transfigured, and we see it bathed in unearthly glory, and death stamps out as the last look of earth, the ineffable rapture and effulgence of heaven. And even while we look and see the glory pale, and the features fall, and death spread his cerecloth over the face, and stamp his impress upon the brow, even while yet we know not that the last breath has gone, already is it heaven, the transition has been made, the portal has been entered, the seraphic vision has been unveiled, the welcome shouted, the rapture felt; and "as is the heavenly," triumphant, and perfect, and blessed, "such are they also that are heavenly." Learn then—

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1. How august and sacred a thing is human nature; even in its lowest state it may not be despised. It is to be mourned over in its fall, but yet remembered in its original, and anticipated in its redemption. You can find it in no condition so abject, but it is capable of bearing "the image of the heavenly." And one of the most precious and impulsive faiths that we can entertain, is faith in the natural grandeur and possibilities of the soul that is within us. Awake, then, men and brethren, to a consciousness of the dignity that sin is degrading; of the sacredness, that sin is desecrating; of the divinity of the temple, that sin is defiling. If there be grandeur in your recognitions of what you might have been, and of what you may be, there will be penitence in the consciousness of what you are, and hope and faith in what you may become. Are ye not capable of God's image, "formed for God's praise?" "Know ye not, that your bodies" may become "the temples of the Holy Ghost?"

2. How sublime a thing is the gospel of Christ; how lofty its ideal; how perfect its morality; how transcendent its issue. "You are to "bear the image of the heavenly." Good men may not be your models, angelic pattern will not suffice; far beyond this are the model and the requirement, you are to be "perfect, even as your Father who is in heaven is perfect." Aught beyond this you cannot conceive, higher than this you cannot aspire, above it Gabriel cannot soar. You are called at once to the highest circle of moral being; nothing can transcend it, nothing ennoble it; in heaven we shall be "like him." The mirror will reflect its own original. God will see in us his own moral image, and the result will be reciprocal and ineffable delight. God in us, and we in God, through all eternity.

3. Hence, thirdly, we may see the source and transcendency of Christian blessedness. From the seraph to the fiend, from the holy one to the evil one, true happiness is graduated by true holiness. It is naturally impossible that a moral nature should divorce its blessedness from its purity. Hence it is that the image of the earthly is ever marked by sorrow, furrowed by its tears, wrinkled by its cares. It boots not to adduce seeming exceptions. Men may flatter themselves that they can indulge the sin and elude the sorrow; and there may be the transient satisfaction, the fitful delirium, the wild and extatic rapture of unholy pleasure; the swamps of sin, may generate round the path of him who traverses them, lurid, and even brilliant lights; but fitful and unsubstantial, they gleam only to delude, and delude only to destroy. And when the balance shall be struck at last, through all the varieties of human experience, it will be found that the sum of happiness is exactly proportionate to the sum of holiness. Need I remind you of the inseparable sorrows of "the earthly;" of its sorrows of body and sorrows of mind; its sorrows of heart and sorrows of home; its sorrows of transgressing youth, and sorrows of remembrance age; its outward woes, and inward conflicts. Full well are you conscious of them as the involved and inseparable elements of moral evil.

But the "image of the heavenly" is the image of joy. It is the image of holiness, and therefore of peace and blessedness. God finds his infinite blessedness in his own infinite holiness; and so it is with all his saints. Theirs is the same felicity, and from the same source—"they drink of the river of his pleasures." Hence the identity of their heavenly with their earthly joy. In heaven it is but joy of higher degree; the expansion of the earthly stream into the heavenly ocean. The believer tastes

"Celestial fruits on earthly ground."

Here he has the earnest, and only awaits the full fruition; the perfection and beatitude of a "just man made perfect." And what a fruition! "the image of the heavenly." God himself can bestow no higher. It is the prime and consummation of all his blessings—for is it not himself? God can do nothing for you so great as to transform you into his own image. This you are to have as a heritage and a felicity for ever. Come what may, you can suffer no harm. The world cannot efface it, death cannot destroy it, dissolution cannot impair it; but from the ruined tabernacle of the body, the soul, bearing its Creator's image, will emerge in its spiritual glory, to be justified at the judgment, and welcomed to the felicities of heaven.

4. Finally, how paramount should be our estimation and pursuit, of the great

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moral purpose of our existence here;—to efface from our fallen nature the “image of the earthly,” which sin has so roughly stamped upon it, and to reproduce in it, its primitive “image of the heavenly.” And it only remains, therefore, for you to gather up all that we have said into this one practical issue—that you determine each for himself, whether or not, in your individual instance, this great end of your probation is being accomplished. For it is fatally possible for you to pass through your probation, amid the facilities and urgencies of the gospel, and yet utterly to neglect it. All bear “the image of the earthly,” but all will not bear “the image of the heavenly.” And if not all, then is there room and earnest urgency for individual and instant self-examination. And as the only needful and satisfactory criterion, we simply remind you again—that if you bear not “the image of the heavenly” now, you will not bear it hereafter. The present is the parent of the future; life on earth, the bud of life in heaven. Every character of the future life is shaped and determined in this. All the moral elements of heaven are found in the soul on earth. Each man walks the earth an incipient seraph, or a premonitory fiend. Every moral thing we do indeed, stretches far beyond the sphere of its doing; it is a causation for eternity. Eternal issues are the result of every action, the embodiment of every thought, the echo of every word. What we are now is only the premonition of what we shall be. Moral character works out its own issues, digs its own hell, or builds its own heaven. For sin and moral death, therefore, only a world of darkness and woe can be imagined; for holiness and spiritual life, a world of blessedness is prepared. Each must “go to his own place;” “the wicked into everlasting fire, the righteous into life eternal.” In either case it is the natural and necessary consummation of present character.

The sole inquiry, therefore, respects your present possession of the elements of Christian character. “Whose image and superscription” do you bear? Is “Christ formed in you the hope of glory?” Are you striving to obliterate “the image of the earthly,” and to perfect “the image of the heavenly?” Oh! this alone, if an undetermined question is worthy of your supreme solicitude; for this, of all things, that now claim your care, will project itself into eternity. Everything else must fall away and perish; the gauds and toys of opulence; the moths and flutterers of pleasure; the butterfly plumage with which men adorn their little life—all are but the outer deckings of the earthly; of the heavenly they can form no part.

And this will be the great and only recognized distinction in the judgment. Other distinctions there now are, between the Jew and the Gentile, the poor and the rich, the ignorant and the learned; but this will be God’s great and final judgment distinction. All other things will, at last, find their issue in this—who “bears the image of the heavenly.” And the distinction will be made, and the judgment awarded, and the destiny cast; and in words of doom, that will abide for ever, it will be proclaimed, “He that is righteous, let him be righteous still, and he that is filthy, let him be filthy still.” Seek them, who seek to be “transformed in the renewing of your mind;” to be sanctified in heart and life. And even ere your probation shall close, “the image of the heavenly” shall be formed within you; holiness shall succeed to sin, and sorrow give place to joy. And when, at last, the day of death shall come, “mortality itself shall be swallowed up of life,” and we shall rise from the grave, bearing the perfect and enduring “image of the heavenly.” Immortality shall rebuild the clay, and holiness shall possess the soul, and reunited in perfect and enduring fellowship recognitions of friends and felicities of heaven shall entrance the heart, and outbursting praise, born of purity equal to that of angels, and enhanced by redeeming raptures that angels never knew, shall fill ear the of the holy one and in perfect purity, and felicity, and immortality, the image of the heavenly consummated, without taint of sin, or fear of change, we shall realize, each for himself, the holy anticipation—“As for me, I shall behold thy face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness.”

CHRIST HEAD OVER ALL THINGS TO THE CHURCH.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JULY 27, 1851,

BY THE REV. J. C. HARRISON,

AT EXETER HALL.

"And gave him to be head over all things to the church"—Ephesians i. 22.

Every man has a twofold history, one general, the other spiritual. Under the first of these are included, the growth, the development, the health and the sickness of his bodily frame, the trade or profession which he follows, the society into which he is thrown, the success or sorrows which he meets with, the knowledge which he acquires, or the work which he performs. To the second belong the truths, moral and spiritual which he believes, the formation of his character, his communion with God, and preparation for eternity. A similar distinction is observable in the history of the world, which is only a multitude of individual men. In its natural and general history, are facts which relate to different races of men, and their physical condition—the rise, growth, and decay of governments, arts, arms, science, and literature ; and in its spiritual history are the records of the progress of truth, the conversion of individuals to faith and holiness, the state progress and influence of the church. Now, it is noticeable that both these histories are under the control of God, that the various events of which they are made up, are either commanded or permitted by him, that the one class of events he rules by his providence, and the other by his grace.

But it is further to be observed, that these events, both natural and spiritual, are very closely allied to each other, that far from being independent of each other, they act and re-act with surprising power. This reciprocal influence is not accidental ; it is appointed and designed by God ;—only he intends that the lower should exist for the higher, and not the higher for the lower. Just as all material nature has been made for the benefit of the sentient, and the irrational for the rational, so both these exist for the spiritual, and all things for the church. This is the great truth which is brought out in our text, namely, that all things exist for the sake of the church. It speaks of the great object contemplated in this world—the progression and prosperity of the church—the subordination of all other things to this high purpose ; and then the guarantee which assures the result, namely, the universal supremacy of our Lord Jesus Christ. We observe then—

I. That the church is the object of pre-eminence in this world ; its prosperity and completeness are the great purposes for which the world exists.

This is a truth of very great importance ; one which is, perhaps, not duly pondered, but one which we shall be well employed in considering. It is stated in our text, that for the church all things exist, as means to an end ; and as the end is always more important than the means, the church must be of more importance than all other things beside. All things for the church. You will recollect that by the church is not intended any sect or section into which the great mass of believers is divided, and which may arrogate to itself the title of "the church," but it relates to all those who name the name of Christ, and love the Lord Jesus in sincerity.

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moral purpose of our existence here ;—to efface from our fallen nature the “image of the earthly,” which sin has so roughly stamped upon it, and to reproduce in it, its primitive “image of the heavenly.” And it only remains, therefore, for you to gather up all that we have said into this one practical issue—that you determine each for himself, whether or not, in your individual instance, this great end of your probation is being accomplished. For it is fatally possible for you to pass through your probation, amid the facilities and urgencies of the gospel, and yet utterly to neglect it. All bear “the image of the earthly,” but all will not bear “the image of the heavenly.” And if not all, then is there room and earnest urgency for individual and instant self-examination. And as the only needful and satisfactory criterion, we simply remind you again—that if you bear not “the image of the heavenly” now, you will not bear it hereafter. The present is the parent of the future; life on earth, the bud of life in heaven. Every character of the future life is shaped and determined in this. All the moral elements of heaven are found in the soul on earth. Each man walks the earth an incipient seraph, or a premonitory fiend. Every moral thing we do, indeed, stretches far beyond the sphere of its doing; it is a causation for eternity. Eternal issues are the result of every action, the embodiment of every thought, the echo of every word. What we are now is only the premonition of what we shall be. Moral character works out its own issues, digs its own hell, or builds its own heaven. For sin and moral death, therefore, only a world of darkness and woe can be imagined; for holiness and spiritual life, a world of blessedness is prepared. Each must “go to his own place;” “the wicked everlasting fire, the righteous into life eternal.” In either case it is the natural and necessary consummation of present character.

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And this will be the great and only recognized distinction in the judgment. Other distinctions there now are, between the Jew and the Gentile, the poor and the rich, the ignorant and the learned; but this will be God’s great and final judgment distinction. All other things will, at last, find their issue in this—who “bears the image of the heavenly.” And the distinction will be made, and the judgment awarded, and the destiny cast; and in words of doom, that will abide for ever, it will be proclaimed, “He that is righteous, let him be righteous still, and he that is filthy, let him be filthy still.” Seek then, oh seek to be “transformed in the renewing of your mind;” to be sanctified in heart and life. And even ere your probation shall close, “the image of the heavenly” shall be formed within you; holiness shall succeed to sin, and sorrow give place to joy. And when, at last, the day of death shall come, “mortality itself shall be swallowed up of life,” and we shall rise from the grave, bearing the perfect and enduring “image of the heavenly.” Immortality shall rebuild the clay, and holiness shall possess the soul, and reunited in perfect and enduring fellowship recognitions of friends and felicities of heaven shall entrance the heart, and outbursting praise, born of purity equal to that of angels, and enhanced by redeeming raptures that angels never knew, shall fill ear the of the holy one and in perfect purity, and felicity, and immortality, the image of the heavenly consummated, without taint of sin, or fear of change, we shall realize, each for himself, the holy anticipation—“As for me, I shall behold thy face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness.”

CHRIST HEAD OVER ALL THINGS TO THE CHURCH.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JULY 27, 1851,

BY THE REV. J. C. HARRISON,

AT EXETER HALL.

"And gave him to be head over all things to the church."—Ephesians i. 22.

Every man has a twofold history, one general, the other spiritual. Under the first of these are included, the growth, the development, the health and the sickness of his bodily frame, the trade or profession which he follows, the society into which he is thrown, the success or sorrows which he meets with, the knowledge which he acquires, or the work which he performs. To the second belong the truths, moral and spiritual which he believes, the formation of his character, his communion with God, and preparation for eternity. A similar distinction is observable in the history of the world, which is only a multitude of individual men. In its natural and general history, are facts which relate to different races of men, and their physical condition—the rise, growth, and decay of governments, arts, arms, science, and literature ; and in its spiritual history are the records of the progress of truth, the conversion of individuals to faith and holiness, the state progress and influence of the church. Now, it is noticeable that both these histories are under the control of God, that the various events of which they are made up, are either commanded or permitted by him, that the one class of events he rules by his providence, and the other by his grace.

But it is further to be observed, that these events, both natural and spiritual, are very closely allied to each other, that far from being independent of each other, they act and re-act with surprising power. This reciprocal influence is not accidental ; it is appointed and designed by God ;—only he intends that the lower should exist for the higher, and not the higher for the lower. Just as all material nature has been made for the benefit of the sentient, and the irrational for the rational, so both these exist for the spiritual and all things for the church. This is the great truth which is brought out in our text, namely, that all things exist for the sake of the church. It speaks of the great object contemplated in this world—the progression and prosperity of the church—the subordination of all other things to this high purpose ; and then the guarantee which assures the result, namely, the universal supremacy of our Lord Jesus Christ. We observe then—

I. That the church is the object of pre-eminence in this world ; its prosperity and completeness are the great purposes for which the world exists.

This is a truth of very great importance ; one which is, perhaps, not duly pondered, but one which we shall be well employed in considering. It is stated in our text, that for the church all things exist, as means to an end ; and as the end is always more important than the means, the church must be of more importance than all other things beside. All things for the church. You will recollect that by the church is not intended any sect or section into which the great mass of believers is divided, and which may arrogate to itself the title of "the church," but it relates to all those who name the name of Christ, and love the Lord Jesus in sincerity.

THE ULTIMATE MORAL PURPOSE OF CHRISTIANITY.

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CHRIST HEAD OVER ALL THINGS TO THE CHURCH.

The illustrious rank of this institution, the church, may be judged of when you recollect that—

1. The church is the realization of the highest Divine idea or thought respecting this world. You will recollect that in the work of creation, when the various productions of Divine skill had been brought into being, in wise and orderly succession,—this regular course is represented as interrupted by deliberation, and then the crowning, clminating act of all was the formation of man in the Divine image—the formation of a being capable of reflecting upon the character of his Maker, and able to understand him, just because he resembled him. This was the greatest work of the whole creation. But, brethren, man fell ; the Divine image was effaced, the bright creation was marred ; the Divine idea had now no corresponding reality. But the church was formed to bring back the reality which had been lost ; to repair the image which had been effaced ; to restore to this world a Being whose heart should be full of holy love, and whose soul should be full of lofty devotion. He was to “put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.” His mind is now open to welcome heavenly truth ; his spirit vividly realizes the infinite and eternal ; his conscience is rendered so sensitive, as to warn against the approach of all evil ; his will is strong, to resist temptation, ready at once to yield to God ; his whole being is renewed, pure, spiritual, devout. Now the church consists of a multitude of such individuals, who are bound to each other by mutual sympathy and love, stimulate one another’s faith, and quicken one another’s loyalty and zeal ; and as the moral and the spiritual is far higher, and far nobler than even the intellectual—the existence of the church is at once the realization of the highest Divine idea, and the restoration of the noblest object to this, our world.

2. And then, another element in the church’s magnificence, arises from the fact that—the church was brought into existence by the most remarkable and interesting means. When we look around on this globe, and the wonderful and varied works on its surface, had we been unacquainted with its history, we might have fancied that a long time must have passed in the creation of those objects, and that by a vast and complicated machinery they were brought into being ; but the inspired word tells us, that when their existence was willed by the Eternal, he “spake, and it was done, he commanded, and it stood fast for ever.” But very different were the circumstances in which the church was originated. There was a vast preparation for it, as if to direct the minds of all to this as a nobler work,—a creation which stood higher than all the rest. The great design of the church had existed in the eternal counsels of God, and then when it was to be completed, he sent his only Son into our world, who took upon him our nature, bled, suffered, agonised, and died, that justice might be satisfied, and sinners return to God. He gave his life for those who were dead in trespasses and sins. Now, dear brethren, if you are to judge of the importance of an end by the means employed for its attainment, then what end can be so noble as this ? Surely you must at once perceive that the church takes a place of pre-eminence, which nothing can approach, and nothing can rival. And then another fact which gives it so much interest is, that—

3. It supplies a special manifestation of the divine character and perfections. Every work, my brethren, is a manifestation of the artist ; it exhibits some features of his character. The vast structure which has brought many of you to this metropolis illustrates the skill and character of that remarkable man by whom it was designed ; and the various products which are contained within the building, all exhibit some feature of skill, dexterity, or power. In like manner every object of creation contains some manifestation of the eternal God : “The invisible things of him are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead.” “The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handiwork, day unto day uttereth speech, night unto night sheweth knowledge.” But, dear brethren, in the church the highest form of power was to be displayed, and his most gracious acts of mercy to be performed. The unswerving rectitude of his government, the infinite

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purity of his character, the exhaustless fertility of his resources, the infinite wisdom of his mind, the exalted benevolence, the tender pity, the matchless mercy of his heart are all illustrated. His moral attributes shine forth most conspicuously here. If the works of creation may be called "the book of nature" in which you may read his general character—the church is an "epistle known and read of all men," in which there are more tender and sacred, more full and unconstrained delineations of his loftiest perfections. Nor is this revelation for man alone,—the intention is that "unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places may be made known by means of the church the manifold wisdom of God." Now, brethren, since God is the noblest being in the universe, that which has in it the most of God, that which most clearly reveals God, that which brings down to us the moral features of the divine character, must be the highest and noblest object that we can contemplate; and such an object is the church of Christ. Still further the church's pre-eminence consists in its being—

4. The source of the highest and purest blessing to the world. The church is emphatically "the light of the world." It is called "the salt of the earth." There is a constant tendency in fallen man to degenerate. If left to himself, without moral and spiritual culture, he sinks lower and lower in the scale of being, until finally he reaches his resting point in the darkness and debasement of savage life. With him perish the arts and science; yea, everything that can give beauty or enjoyment to life. Or if circumstances exist which prevent them from sinking so low, if the fruits of genius are witnessed, and a subtle philosophy flourishes; if skilful laws are framed, and civilization is carried to a high pitch, still the morals of the people are debased, and exalted purity is unknown. The real benefits of civilization and learning are confined to the privileged few, whilst the many have been plunged in ignorance and licentiousness, or trampled upon as serfs and slaves. Now the church is the spiritual educator of the world; it seeks to give an upward tendency to its character and its pursuits. Instead of confining its instructions to the initiated and the privileged, it offers its blessings to all, whilst it may be emphatically said, "to the poor the gospel is preached." The masses, who were overlooked by ancient masters of philosophy, are especially sought out and addressed by the church. Raised by its teaching morally and religiously, they are raised altogether. They seek better food and clothing and dwellings,—science assists art and industry to supply their wants,—trade and commerce advance, and the church blesses the world secularly as well as spiritually. But in reference to all that is moral and religious, it may be truly said that the church preserves society from putrefaction. Even now when so much is done by her members, look at the multitudes in our towns and hamlets,—observe the squalor and drunkenness, the vice and degradation in which they live,—listen to the blasphemy and obscenity which flow from their lips; and then fancy that the church were blotted out from existence, that her form of purity were no more seen, her words of mercy and truth and love no more heard, every admonition and warning hushed, nothing interposed to check the downward, destructive impulse,—and then what would be the character of man? What would society become but a putrefying mass, offensive to all the un-fallen, and fit only for the judgment and malediction of God.

But this is not all; the church not only preserves from a result so disastrous, but it does much in the cause of progression by the diffusion of knowledge amongst mankind, by preaching the gospel and by circulating the word of life. By it a quickened and upward tendency has been imparted; society is advancing; man is rising; and the church is the power by which humanity is to be elevated into a new and spiritual life.

Nor is this all. This world is not our resting place. We are not destined to live here always, but though our bodies must die our spirit is immortal, and that spirit must enter on an eternity of woe or joy. The church comes to those that are perishing, hastening on to an eternity of ruin, and says to them pause in that downward career! Think of the regions to which you are rushing; look to the Saviour and you will have life. That soul, vast in its capabilities of sorrow, shall find boundless joy. Instead of perishing ever-

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lastingly, it shall live everlasting with God. Its powers, instead of being crushed by darkness and despair, shall all expand and exult in light, purity, and love. Thus, brethren, you perceive the church is the source of the highest blessing to the world; that it is to mankind a real and unequalled benefactor, and hence it is the loftiest institution of which earth can boast. It soars above everything else. It takes the highest position; and looking down in pity and love on all besides, seeks to raise them to a loftier elevation and to invest them with a holier character. It says to them, "Come and join us, and in joining us you will be rendered pure, and happy for time, and blessed to all eternity." This being the case, you cannot wonder at another feature in the church's elevation, and that is, that—

5. It is the object of special divine love and complacency. When God was engaged in the work of creation, as object after object came into existence, he surveyed the works of his own hand, and pronounced each to be "very good;" but when the church came into existence, he regarded that with a deeper and tenderer satisfaction, and said—"I have loved thee with an everlasting love, and therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee." He looked on the church, not only with the general benevolence, or even with the pity and compassion which he bestowed on others, but with unalterable complacency, satisfaction, and delight. It corresponded in some measure with his own glorious character; it manifested the utmost fealty, gratitude, and obedience to him. He is holy, faithful, and true. The church was the depository of the highest truth, amongst the faithless maintained fidelity to him, and both loved and illustrated the beauty of holiness. Just as the father who has been deserted by many of his children, and treated with the utmost indignity and cruelty, beholds with concentrated affection, with tears of joy, those who have stood by him, or have been reclaimed; so the eternal amidst the rebellion and blasphemy of those, whom his own hands made, regards the church—his family of redeemed ones—with intense affection, and says, "he that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of mine eye." "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb; yea, she may forget, yet will I not forget thee." "I will never leave thee, I will never forsake thee." It is thus, I say, that God loves his family, and he promises and assures them the enjoyment of a blessed eternity. And as God's special regard, is undoubtedly reserved for the noblest and best, you perceive that the church is the most illustrious object in this world. You cannot, therefore, wonder at the second fact which our text brings out.

II. *The subordination of all other things to the church.*

Christ is "head over all things to the church;" evidently implying that these things are under the dominion of Christ for the good of the church. Hence—

1. All things have been and still are working in aid of the church. The history of the individual Christian and the history of the church in this respect greatly resemble each other. He is placed here to be trained for immortality, to form a character which shall be ripe for heaven. Health and sickness, prosperity and adversity, society and solitude, the daily circumstances and the extraordinary events of life, are intended to root out some evil, to confirm some excellence, to add strength or symmetry to his character, for "all things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are the called according to his purpose." In like manner to the church, the apostle could address these words of congratulation, "all things are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or life or death, or things present or things to come, all are yours, for ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's." It would be long to tell and yet interesting to observe how all things were pressed into the service of the olden church. Corn and fruits and flowers were used as offerings to express the glad or thankful emotions of the worshipper. The cattle on the hills were presented in sacrifice to symbolize the great doctrine of propitiation. Stone and timber and metal were used for the construction of the temple, which, adorned with gems and gold, and perfumed with frankincense, was designed as a material dwelling place for the invisible and eternal God. Such events as the Deluge, for instance, with the

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Ark of refuge, served to show the justice and decision of the Divine government, and to awaken the feeling that the only safety is in the church. The bondage in Egypt, and the hardship endured there, bound the people more closely together as a nation, inspired them with hatred of the idolatry of their oppressors, and prepared them to welcome the guidance and instructions of the Most High. Whilst the record of these and similar events is now preserved for "our instruction, on whom the end of the world is come."

Then when the Saviour came to work out our redemption, "a body was prepared for him"—a material structure like our own—and blood, and suffering, and death were employed to illustrate the evil of sin, and to call forth respect for law. The anger and rage and cruelty of man were laid under contribution, and forced to yield their share to the wants of the church. "With wicked hands the Lord was crucified and slain." The base and malignant passions were in existence, and, like a swollen and impetuous river, would overflow in deeds of violence and wrong; when the Eternal formed, as it were, a channel along which they might rush, and waste their fury for the benefit of the church, when they designed its injury. Thus the wrath of man was made to praise him, and a sacrifice was offered for the vindication of his justice and for the salvation of his people. Afterwards, when the glad tidings were to be made known, everything served the purpose. The circle of events and the state of society were adapted to this end. Men were almost wearied with the uncertainty of philosophy, and the useless succession of one baseless system to another. Literature had sharpened the mind, and rendered it capable of passing judgment on the facts of Christianity, so that the church could not be said to have been smuggled into existence in an age of darkness. The world was at peace, and had leisure to attend to the truths of the new system. The Roman government, for the most part tolerant in spirit, was widely extended, and thus facilities were afforded for the preaching of the apostles. Circumstances also favoured the labours of the first heralds of the gospel. To take only one example. When the apostle was summoned by a supernatural vision to leave Asia for Europe—to declare the gospel not to the indolent yet imaginative Oriental mind, but to the strong, logical, Western mind—he was at Troas, and was summoned to Macedonia. Now at Troas, Alexander had visited the tomb of Achilles, and there had been excited to attempt the conquest of the East, whereby the Greek language and customs had spread through the nations of Asia and had already assisted the apostle in his missionary work. Philippi, the city which he first entered on reaching Macedonia, was a Roman colony, with Roman institutions, connected by the great Roman road with other colonies and cities, and must have brought before his mind the facilities which were offered for the rapid publication of the truth. Thus secular men and secular events had in reality done much for the extension of the church; and just as we learn that during long geological eras depositions have been made, strata formed, and the present earth gradually prepared for the habitation and activity of man, so by successive facts and events the world was gradually fitted for the coming and the labours of the church, and even heros and conquerors had unwittingly been "casting up a high-way for our God." Time would fail me to show how the superstitions of the dark ages, and the doctrines of sceptical times were allowed to work themselves out into results, which helped the church by demonstrating that man cannot live on darkness, ignorance, or doubt, but needs some "sure and faithful word" to support and satisfy his mind; or how the invention of printing, the discovery of America, the doubling the Cape of Good Hope, and the political state of the Continent of Europe, no less than the condition of the public mind, aided Luther in his glorious work and strengthened the cause of the Reformation: or how arts and refinement, industry and labour, wealth and influence, peace and war, liberty and education have all concurred to do honour to the church and to multiply its converts. That this great industrial Exhibition will conduce to the same end, we would earnestly hope. Foreigners, we trust, will ascribe the stability of our institutions, the loyalty and quiet industry of our population, our purer morality, our happy homes, and our greatness as a nation, to our Sabbaths,

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our Bibles, our Protestant faith, and our evangelical preaching. If so, the influence on their own countries may be great, and a testimony may be borne to simple, genuine, Christianity, which will never die.

At any rate, we see that the central idea in the history of the world must ever be the church. Nor can any greater error be committed than to attempt a philosophy of history in which the church is passed by or treated with comparative indifference. On the other hand, nothing can be more interesting than to connect all events with this grand purpose,—to watch their effects in relation to it,—and to observe how all things exist for the church. And since this is the case—

2. The church should use all things for its own progress and advantage. All inferior things are given for the use of man, and he is only required to employ them wisely and becomingly. So all things are intended to be subordinate to the service and welfare of the church, and all that is demanded is that the church should use them in a prudent and Christian spirit. The apostle Paul was ready to take advantage of every accomplishment which he possessed, as well as of every passing occurrence, to further the spread of the gospel, or the edification and enlargement of the church. He used his knowledge of Judaism, to illustrate the connexion of the old covenant with the new; his being a pharisee, to conciliate the favour of those, on behalf of his mission who believed in the resurrection of the dead,—his being a Roman citizen, to regain liberty and influence in carrying on his great work,—his acquaintance with Gentile philosophy, to silence or convince the gainsaying sophists of Athens,—his citation before Agrippa, to preach the gospel to that unprincipled and licentious king,—his skill in tent-making, to render him independent of those who might have questioned his motives, had he accepted his legitimate reward;—his mental resources, his logical power, his fervent eloquence, together with his crosses, trials, losses, imprisonments, perils—to expel prejudice, unbelief, and opposition, from the mind of his hearers, and to win converts to the faith of Jesus. Thus ought the church to obtain from its members' money, time, influence, self-denial, labour—all that they possess, and all that they can affect, in order to its extension and prosperity. Nor should the present gathering of the people be left unimproved. Much has been done already to spread union and love of peace among them, and to afford them an opportunity of reading and hearing the gospel. May we have grace by prayer and skilful effort, to turn this occasion to still higher advantage, that it may subserve the interests of the church, and thereby the god of the world.

Some, however, when they exercise their observation, or look into the records of history, may not clearly see that the world is helping the church, or that all events can be said to be tributary to it. But our text, in the third place, reminds us of

III. *The guarantee that is furnished for the attainment of this high end, in the universal supremacy of the Redeemer.* He is head over all things to the church, and hence we need not doubt. For—

1. He has the ability and the authority to render all things subservient to the church. When you remember what he has accomplished, you will feel that he is able also to accomplish this. He, who could bear the sins of the whole world, illustrate the inflexibility and purity of the Divine government, vindicate a holy, and perfect, and infinite law, trample on the power of Satan, subdue sin in the human heart, give life to those who were "dead in trespasses and sins," and fit for glory those who seemed ripe for destruction, must be almighty, and therefore able to make all things contribute to the good and growth of the church. Moreover, he was appointed by the Allwise to this office. "He gave him to be head over all things to the church." His very appointment implies his ability. When a pilot is appointed to a ship, or a judge to the bench, or a governor over a district, they are from that fact supposed to have qualification for their office. So it is in the case of the Redeemer. But what qualifications are implied in his appointment to his office? "Head over all things." Think of the innumerable objects which exist in this world, with their subtle and complex laws and relations. Think

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of the events which are hourly taking place, all interwoven with each other, and perplexing the most acute by their number and complication. Think of the facts of science which are constantly multiplying, and leading to the discovery of some more useful application of nature's laws. Think of the thoughts and motives of the human breast, with which a stranger cannot intermeddle, and which even the possessor does not fully understand. Remember that you restrict not your observation to the limited circle in which you live, but embrace the whole world, with all its inhabitants and appendages, throughout its whole history; and then say what must be the powers of him who could direct the whole to the one lofty end—the progress and welfare of the church? Surely, you must conclude that "the government is upon his shoulders," because he is "Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace." With this conclusion, the whole inspired word accords. He is the word, was with God—was God. "By him all things were made, and without him nothing was made that is made." "This is the true God and eternal life." Therefore, you may rest satisfied that he is able to bend all things to the end which he proposes. Then, further—

2. His love to the church will secure this result. For his love to the church was no common affection. He came into this world, and became the victim of unweary opposition, of cruel persecution,—he endured watching, and fasting, and cold, and weariness,—he experienced the basest ingratitude from his countrymen, and even unfaithfulness in his friends,—he suffered in the garden a season of anguish and desertion, which made him sorrowful even unto death, and on the cross he groaned and bled, and expired under the weight of the world's sin,—and the issue, the glorious result of all this toil and woe, is the church. Can you wonder, then, that he regarded it as his own offspring, or that it should be said, "Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it?" As the parent, who has, after long wandering and suffering, at much cost and with many tears, succeeded in restoring to comfort, and virtue, and affection, his erring and guilty child, looks upon him with an affection all the more deep and sacred from the pains by which he was restored, so the Saviour, as he beholds his church, once a wanderer, but now at home, declares with unutterable love, "This, my Son, was dead, and is alive again; was lost, and is found." In this love you have a sure pledge that all things shall, in the end, serve the church. And the same conviction will be deepened when it is remembered.

3. That the Saviour's position, as head over all things to the church, and its consequent elevation are the reward of his mediatorial work. "Therefore, God hath highly exalted him, and gave him a name above every other name." And in the context, it is implied that, because of his work he is raised "far above all principality and power, and might and dominion;" all things are put under his feet, and he is appointed head over all things to the church. Then, be assured, he will secure his own triumph, and his own reward. The church's completeness will be his richest recompense. It was "for this joy that was set before him, that he endured the cross and despised the shame;" and when he shall behold this, he will see of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied. As Christ, therefore, is head over all things to his church, all things shall work together for the church's good.

Then, brethren, we see how certain it is that the church will triumph. I know that appearances are sometimes against it: I know that sometimes secularity and worldliness seem to creep in and eat out its piety. Sometimes assaults from the Man of Sin threaten it; but all these things will but make the triumph the greater. All these things are under the control of Infinite Wisdom, and though they may sometimes appear mysterious, they are all working for the church's appear influence, and strength. Fear not; the church shall triumph; its progress shall be perpetual, and at last it shall "Come forth clear as the moon, bright as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners."

We see next, dear brethren, *how great is the honour of doing anything to aid the church.*

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If the church is the noblest institution in this world, and if it is an object of divine complacency ; what an honour in any way to promote and serve that church and advance its welfare. Are Christians fully alive to this fact ? Are their strength, energy, and influence engaged in the work of the church as they ought to be, or are they expended on some other object ? Are they using the same amount of energy for advancing the cause of Christ that they are employing in the pursuits of science or humanity ? I beseech you, dear brethren, to make the church the object of your chief love ; value it ; be identified with its progress ; for in doing so you will enjoy the greatest honour and happiness that you can attain on earth ; and to recount its successes will be a chief delight in heaven. This brings us to the last point.

How noble the privilege of belonging to the church.

All things else are but as the scaffolding for this building ; and when the church shall be quite complete, beautiful, glorious, pure, symmetrical, every stone fitted to its place—then all these things, as the scaffolding, shall be taken down and done away with—burned, destroyed ; and the church shall shine forth in all its brightness and glory and magnitude. Why then, brethren, will you spend all your strength upon the scaffolding which must perish ? How much more glorious to belong to the church which shall endure for ever ; and then your happy privilege will be when the church is completed, to “sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to the marriage supper of the Lamb.”

It may be, that some who have turned in here this day to listen to the gospel do not belong to this church. Then, to such, I say, you have “sinned against heaven,” you have forgotten your Father and benefactor ; come then, this day, and confess your sins, and cast yourself upon that gracious Saviour, who died to redeem you, and pray that the Holy Spirit may renew your minds, purify your affections, and render you meet for heaven. Come and seek admittance into the spiritual church ; there is danger in delay ; time is passing away ; and ere long, just as yonder magnificent structure will be stripped of its contents, and itself, possibly raised to the ground, so all earthly things will perish, and become as though they had never been.

Seek then, dear friends, to become united to Christ by a living faith, and then whilst you will be honoured to serve him on earth, you will receive the great privilege of enjoying him in eternity.

May God add his blessing ; and to his name shall be the glory. Amen.

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The following Nos. of the Penny Pulpit contain Sermons delivered at Exeter Hall.

- 1,700, The Great Exhibition, by the Rev. T. Binney.
- 1,701, The Gift of God, by the Hon. and Rev. B. W. Noel, M.A.
- 1,705, The Prodigal's Return, by the Rev. W. Brock.
- 1,706, The City of Refuge, by the Rev. J. Beaumont, M.D.
- 1,710, The Truth, by the Rev. J. Aldis.
- 1,711, Wisdom's Invitation, by the Rev. G. Smith.
- 1,713, Looking to Christ, by the Rev. J. Hamilton, D.D.
- 1,714, Why will ye die ? by the Rev. J. Stoughton.
- 1,717, The Gospel, by the Rev. Luke Tyerman.
- 1,718, The Testimonies of God, by the Rev. T. Archer, D.D.
- 1,720—21, The Book for all Nations, and all Times, by the Rev. J. C. Miller.
- 1,724, Salvation, by the Rev. G. Clayton.
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- 1,727, The Goodness and Love of God, by the Hon & Rev. B. W. Noel, M.A.
- 1,728, The Final Judgment, by the Rev. John Burnet.
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- 1,733, Witnessing to the Truth, by the Rev. C. Stovel.
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- 1,738, The Hope of the Believer, by the Rev. W. Brock.
- 1,739, The Power of Faith and Prayer, by the Rev. W. Chalmers.
- 1,741-42, The Catholicity of the Gospel, by the Rev. J. Dixon, D.D.
- 1,743, The Saviour Knocking at the Door, by the Rev. James Hamilton, D.D.
- 1,744, The Righteousness of God, by the Rev. J. Beaumont, M.D.
- 1,747-48, Great Gatherings, by the Rev. J. Stoughton.
- 1,750, The Mystery of Life, by the Rev. G. Smith.
- 1,751, The Brazen Serpent, by the Rev. W. Chalmers.
- 1,752, The Heirs of God, by the Rev. T. Binney.

(To be continued.)

CHRISTIAN IS A SON OF GOD NOT MAN

THE REDEEMED FROM AMONG ALL NATIONS.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY EVENING, JULY 27, 1851,

BY THE REV. JOHN WEIR,

(Of the River Terrace Presbyterian Church,

AT EXETER HALL.

"After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; and cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb."—Revelations vii. 9, 10.

THERE are some subjects, my dear brethren, presented to us in the wondrous revelations of God's Holy Book, which demand from us the most vigorous exercise of the understanding, in order that we may rise to the height of the great argument. There are other topics again, which, while invested with unutterable sublimity and grandeur, appeal less to the powers of the intellect than to the affections of the heart. It is under the second of these that we are disposed to class the theme which this evening invites our devout attention. Here you will at once recognize one of the many descriptions which our gracious God has condescended to give us of that state of eternal blessedness which he has reserved for them that love him. We must admit that these descriptions which are scattered over the pages of the word of God, are generally figurative in their character; but what else could be the case when heaven is, as it were, to be brought down to earth, and the nature of its joys to be made in any degree familiar to earth-born men. While, therefore, we find heaven spoken of as a "country," we grant that it is not literally true that it is a country such as Canaan was, with its goodly mount of Lebanon, and its glorious cedars—whose terraced hills, like those of Eschol, are laden with clusters of grapes, and whose plains are clothed with the rose of Sharon and the lily of the valley. Again, when heaven is spoken of as a city, it is not meant that there is literally a new Jerusalem, with "walls great and high, with twelve gates, and each gate a separate pearl; and at these gates twelve angels, with foundations garnished with all manner of precious stones, and on them the names of the twelve apostles and the Lamb." Still, however, we accept these descriptions of "the glory that shall be revealed" with thankfulness and joy; for they are associated in our minds with all that was excellent in the eyes of God's chosen tribes in the days of old, and with the land which was given them—a land that flowed with milk and honey—a land that was blessed of the Lord for the precious things of the earth, and for the fulness thereof—and through these descriptions our hearts rise more easily to another country, even an heavenly, which he who dwelt in the Bush has purchased and prepared, even "the inheritance of the saints in light." And so "the city which hath foundations, and whose builder and maker

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is God," lifts up our hearts to that stable place of rest whither all God's wandering children shall come to—that glorious city of habitation, into whose gates after having crossed the wilderness they shall enter, and from whose golden streets they shall no more go out. Thrice happy, dear brethren, is the man who has a good hope through grace! He can afford (if I may so speak), to wait for the full-orbed glories of eternity, and for the manifestation of the sons of God. Meantime, it is our delightful privilege to refresh our souls, and to quicken our languid footsteps in the heavenly race, by the contemplation of the joy that is set before us.

Here is John in Patmos, a sea-girt isle, where, like Ezekiel, by the banks of the river Chebar, he sees visions of God. It is not a vision of the night. It is not a mere dream of the imagination. "Falling into a trance" his eyes are opened to the sublime realities prophetically passing before him. He has already seen the Son of Man walking in priestly garments in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks. He has beheld his feet, as it were of fine brass as if it burned in a furnace. He has heard his voice, as the sound of many waters. He has seen him again, as the Lion of the tribe of Judah, open the book, unloose the seals, and discover to the church the awful and glorious future. Now a still more blessed vision comes upon his sight; he looks, and we look with him. We stand with him, and gaze "through the door opened in heaven," and our hearts are thrilled with the spectacle. "After this I beheld, and lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, out of every kindred, nation, tongue, and people, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and with palms in their hands; and cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb!"

Let us this evening, brethren, turn aside and see this great sight, before which all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them—all the accumulated treasures lately brought together in that wondrous palace, wherein is collected and concentrated an unparalleled variety of the rarest productions of nature and art—must "pale their ineffectual fires;" and let every child of God now present lift up his heart in earnest prayer, that the Spirit of truth and love may put honour upon his own word, that some dead souls may be quickened, some cold hearts warmed, and that this vast assembly may depart laden with blessings.

In considering the various points here stated in the regard to the redeemed in glory, you will observe—

FIRST, that they are described as a "*multitude that no man can number.*" You are aware that the term "multitude" is often so employed, that it signifies a number which has been, or can be definitely ascertained. For instance, we are told that in the days of Asa, king of Judah, a fearful assault was made upon the kingdom by an invading host of "a thousand thousand," under Zerah, the king of Ethiopia, when Asa cried, "Help us, O God, for we trust in thee, and in thy name, go out against this *multitude*;" here the term "multitude" suggests to us an army of a million of men. So also when 4,000 persons are assembled in this hall we say what a "multitude" is here. When we hear of 70,000 persons assembling under another roof, commingling the costumes of every clime, and the languages of every land, still we say—what a "multitude" was there! But observe, the language of the text gives far more emphasis to the term when it is stated that it is a "multitude which no man can number." There is a strong before the throne of God which no arithmetic has ever reckoned, which no census has ever enumerated; and which no one but he who "numbereth the stars, and calleth them all by their names," can possibly embrace within his ken.

Such an assurance is radiant with gladness to a heart sighing over the miseries and crimes of which the earth has been so long the theatre, and where Satan, even now, has "his seat and great authority." Even as God, when he entered into a covenant with Abraham, bade him lift up his eyes to the midnight heavens, and behold the stars which studded the skies, saying, "So shall thy seed be," even as Paul declares Abraham's natural posterity to have been—

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"as many as the stars of heaven for multitude, and, as the sands of the sea shore innumerable;" so, also, shall be the spiritual posterity of Abraham—even true believers who are his seed and heirs according to the promise.

When we are assured that the redeemed in glory shall be a countless throng, the mind is staggered at the thought; and at first we are scarcely prepared to receive it. We remember the multitudes which have passed into eternity unprepared, and that in all ages only the minority of the human race has been on the Lord's side. We go back to the antediluvian age, when there were but a few who, like Enoch, were found "faithful amid the faithless." In the times of Noah the whole church of God was shut up in the ark, wherein few, even eight souls, were saved by water. We trace the history of Abraham's race, and recollect that even amongst them, who had such light and privileges, "to whom pertained the glory, and the covenant, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises"—that all were not Israel that were of Israel—that but few, compared with the majority, clave closely to the God of their fathers, and were "a band of men whose hearts God had touched." We remember, also, that during the whole Jewish dispensation, over the rest of the nations there brooded a darkness which might be felt. When again you come down to the period of the advent of Christ, you find that when he "came to his own, his own received him not." They were a stiff-necked and perverse generation who resisted the Holy Ghost, and killed the Prince of life and glory. And even after allowance has been made for the triumphs of Christianity in apostolic times, when the pentecostal showers came down from heaven, yet still you find the pure gospel speedily corrupted, and the great apostacy early springing up in its malignity and power. The true church was driven into the wilderness, and Papal darkness, and Mahomedan delusion, with the paganism of China and Asia, divided amongst them for many centuries the eastern and western world. Then came Luther, who, putting the trumpet to his lips, aroused all Europe from its slumbers, and men began to read and hear in their own tongues the wonderful works of God. Many then, and many since have been gathered into heaven. But even now, while civilization is numbering its triumphs, and while evangelical truth is widely spreading over the earth, still you find,—even in these islands of the sea, in this great metropolis, and in every city, village, and hamlet of the land—the mass of the population is such as in the judgment of charity cannot be recognized as the Lord's redeemed. You ask in wonder and in doubt—how then is it that we have it asserted here that the number in heaven shall be "a great multitude which no man can number?"

Admitting that there have been but few comparatively in any age, who have been the Lord's true servants—that they have been like units contrasted with the multitude of them that were his enemies; yet all those who have lived and died in Christ in past ages—and who are now before the throne—these alone constitute a mighty host. You recollect that, in the darkest times God has had a people. Even as he said to the prophet Elijah, when he cried, "I only am left"—"I have reserved unto myself 7,000, who have not bowed the knee to Baal," so, in the very worst periods of the world's history there has been a remnant according to the election of grace." Moreover, if all the saints now on earth could be gathered together into one place, oh, what a gladsome and cheering sight it would be, by reason of the multitude! They would come from the shores of China, from the steppes of Tartary, from the snows of Greenland, from the pine forests of America, from the isles of the southern seas, from the kraal of the Kaffir and the Hottentot, from the vales of Hungary, and from the sunny plains of Italy—aye, and even from the seven-hilled city itself. And has Christianity lost its pristine energy and power? Is the gospel dispensation waxing old and ready to vanish away? No! we believe, our holy religion is now girding herself to meet the last assaults of her foes, and when the struggle is past, the cry shall be heard, "Arise, and shine! for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee!" By the missionaries of the cross the first fruits of a glorious harvest have been already reaped; and in the signs of the times, in those "wars, pestilences, and famines," by which the millennium is to be ushered in—in the triumphs of science, by which the ocean has been bridged,

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and the lightning has become the messenger of human thought—in all the judgments of an angry God, and in all the triumphs of human genius, you see the subordinate means which serve to bring about that blessed era when the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, and when all shall know him, from the least even unto the greatest—when the people of many generations shall have passed from the church on earth to the church in glory—when Satan shall be shut up in the bottomless pit, and “earth keep jubilee a thousand years.”

Add to all these the myriad multitudes of little infants, who have not sinned after the similitude of Adam’s transgression, who have had their original defilement removed by the precious blood of him who said, “Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven,” and who are now in glory as lambs in the pastures of the great Shepherd, and will you not be prepared to hail it as a blessed fact, that the Lord’s redeemed ones shall indeed be, when finally gathered together, “a great multitude, which no man can number?”

2. In the salvation of this mighty host what a manifestation there is of a gracious sovereignty! It is not said that all nations shall be saved, but a great multitude “out of all nations, and kindreds, tongues, and people.” There are some who teach that there is a time coming when evil shall cease in the universe of God—when the fires of hell shall be quenched, and when there shall be nothing but peace, and unity, and holiness, and love, and not one absent or missing from the marriage supper of the Lamb. But, my dear friends, such is not the teaching of the word of God, which assures us that as Christ shall say, “Come ye blessed of my father,” to them on his right hand, so will he say to those on his left—“Depart ye cursed into everlasting fire;” and while of the one it is said they shall go “into life eternal,” the same word is used in the original to indicate the never-ending misery of the other. The sufferings of the lost must therefore endure as long as the felicity of the redeemed. “The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the gospel,” and these we are assured shall be punished “with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and the glory of his power.” We dare not keep back this part of the truth of God. Oh! sinners flatter not yourselves that the fires of Tophet are purifying and not penal, the only source of cleansing is the blood of Christ—the present is the only sphere of probation; and it is written of the lost, “the smoke of their torments ascended up for ever and ever.” “It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.” “Our God is a consuming fire.” “The worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.” Now, brethren, now is the accepted time, and as the tree falls so it lies. There is but one way to escape from the coming wrath, and to all who refuse it the Judge must say, “Behold ye despisers, and wonder, and perish!”

3. But this multitude is varied. It is from every nation. Even now the name of Jesus is lisped by infants of every land and of every tongue. “For many ages,” says a dear brother,* who has sometimes addressed you in this place, “one nation supplied most of the inhabitants of heaven, but Jesus broke down the partition wall, and since the gospel went into all the world, all the world has contributed its citizens to the New Jerusalem. The Latin tongue has sent its Cornelius and its Clement, the Greek its Apollos and its Stephen—the Philippian jailer, and the Ethiopian treasurer are there. Men of all aptitudes, of all instincts, of all grades and conditions are there.” And this witness is true. For it is the glory of the gospel, my dear brethren, that long ago it overleaped the boundaries of Palestine, and has folded in its loving embrace a great multitude gathered out of every nation under heaven. It has come to these islands and blessed our fathers, and blessed ourselves; and through the translation of the Bible into one hundred and forty different dialects and languages—through the sending forth of men, who if they had not the Pente-

* Dr. James Hamilton.

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costal gift of tongues, yet by devotedness of heart, and talents specially bestowed, were speedily able to preach to every nation under heaven in their own tongue the wonderful works of God—it has come to pass that the Bible and the gospel have gathered their trophies from every shore, and laid them down at the Redeemer's feet.

4. Observe *the station they occupy*. "They stand before the throne and before the Lamb." If you consult the fourth chapter of Revelations, you will find a description of the throne here alluded to. The Apostle looked, and behold there was a door in heaven, and he beheld a throne, and one sat thereon, who was to look upon like unto a jasper and a sardine stone; and there was a rainbow round about the throne in sight like unto an emerald. The pure white of the jasper indicated the spotless holiness of the Almighty; the fiery red of the sardine was the display of his awful justice in vindication of his outraged laws; but here holiness and justice harmonize with mercy, "God in Christ" a covenant God is here, and this is represented in the rainbow which is "round about the throne, and which in sight is like unto an emerald." And in the midst of the throne there was a "Lamb as it had been slain." If these multitudes are in heaven, it is because this Lamb became the burden bearer; therefore they sing, "Thou wast slain and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation." And the station which they occupy—"standing before the throne and before the Lamb"—indicates that in those who have reached the regions of glory, humility, and gratitude abound, for they are standing there in acknowledgment of their obligation to the everlasting love of the Father, and the redeeming grace of his eternal Son.

5. Let us notice *the dress* which they wear. They are clothed in white robes. Once they were stained and defiled by original impurity, and by actual transgression. Some were vile, indeed. There was the bloody Mannasseh, there was the thief on the cross, a Saul of Tarsus, and a Mary Magdalene. Some were proud Pharisees, others blaspheming infidels, or cruel persecutors of the saints; but all their stains are gone, and their robes, which were once so filthy, are now whiter than the snow. How has this mighty change been effected? Those multitudes "have come out of great tribulation," but it is not the tears they shed in the wilderness that have cleansed them. They have passed through fire and water, as it were, to attain their present state, but neither on earth, nor in any transition state was there a purifying place to be found. It is the blood of the Lamb that is the true purgatory, and which has cleansed them from all sin. All too have entered heaven by *one way*. Some persons tell us that there are many roads to glory, and that if a man be but sincere—sincere as a Hindoo, a Chinese Idolator, or a Mahomedan, or as a follower of any other creed, his sincerity ensures his salvation. But Jesus says, "I am the door, I am the way, no man cometh to the Father but by me." Oh let us never, forget this; for if we cannot say that in faith, "Surely in the Lord have I righteousness and strength," if we cannot sing—

"Jesus, thy blood and righteousness
My beauty are—my glorious dress,"

if we do not feel and confess that we owe all to him who poured out his soul unto death, that he might fill the fountain to the brim; then we are not among the ransomed of the Lord. We are saved only by the love that brought Jesus to endure the cross—that love which many waters could not quench, neither the floods drown it. And if there are any who say with the Socinian, it would have been unjust to punish the innocent for the guilty—and it was needless for Christ to die as a substitute, we reply, the sinless one *did* suffer; God is just—and not for Christ's own sins did he inflict the suffering, for he was without fault; the mystery therefore can only be explained by the assurance that "the Lord laid on him the iniquities of us all."

To-morrow the sun, over a large part of Northern Europe,* will undergo an eclipse, and when you shall see, even here, a partial obscuration pass across the

* Referring to the Solar Eclipse, on the 28th July, 1851.

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brightness of his face, forget not, I beseech you, that day of days to which you can trace back all your hopes for eternity, when the sun became "black as sack-cloth of hair"—when there was "darkness over all the land, from the sixth to the ninth hour," and when a more terrible eclipse than that of the orb of day rested upon the soul of him who from eternity had basked in the sunshine of his Father's smiles—when he cried out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

6. But not only had they "white robes," but they bore "*palmis in their hands.*" What are these palms? They are emblematical of a battle fought, and victory won. Transport yourselves back to the days of ancient Rome, when she filled the world with the terror of her arms, and when the eagles on her standards led on her legions to successive conquests. Take your stand on the Appian way, as the city pours out its multitudes to hail the return of the general and his troops on the day when the senate has decreed to them a public triumph. Mark the victor in his car! See how he stands proudly erect, and scatters largesses of money among the multitude, who hail him with loud acclamations! Mark, also, the approach of those veterans who have followed him in the bloody fight, and who are now returning with him to receive the rewards of a grateful country! Where are their armour? The helmet is removed from the head; the coat of mail, the broad shield, and the greaves of iron are gone; white and flowing robes now cover their bodies; and in each warrior's hand the glittering sword, has been replaced by the palm branch as the emblem of consummated victory.

Thus it is with that multitude now before the throne and before the Lamb. Here below they fought many a battle. Enemies have come out against them worse than the troops of Moab and Amelek, which harrassed the Israelites in the wilderness, and the battle often waxed hot and fierce. But oh! they had a nobler intercessor than Moses, one who needs no Aaron or Hur to hold up his arms while he is interceding for them—and "the shout of a king was among them." Satan sometimes came to them as an angel of light, with the flattering falsehood of "another gospel," or by the tempting baits of riches, honours, and pleasures, dazzling, and full of danger. Or he sought to destroy them by assuming his proper shape, and hurling against them the fiery darts of thoughts blasphemous and impure, infidel thoughts, or thoughts despairing. Again, the world renewed the assault now by its seductive smiles, its ungodly companionships, its carking cares, its delusive hopes, and anon, by its bitter mockery, or its fiery persecution. And, worst of all, that power of indwelling sin, which remained and clung to the best of God's saints, as long as they were on earth, and the taint of which could only be removed by death—like the leper's house, which must be utterly cast down and destroyed—which brought down Noah, David, and Peter, prostrate on the plain—that evil nature, this many a time and oft, has led them into bondage. But this long protracted conflict, the reality of which, some here to-night can testify from their own experience, has come to an end—this tumult of foes is now past, and yonder, in the bright robes of the redeemed, is a multitude of Christian warriors, each waving his blood-bought palm. They have fought for life eternal, but they have not done battle in their own strength; they did all things through Christ, who strengthened them. Each looked to him as the leader and commander of his people, and as the captain of their salvation, made perfect through suffering. Now they wave the conquerors palm, in honour of him who loved them, and gave himself for them, and who has brought them off more than conquerors.

7. They sing the praises of God and the Lamb. No wonder they sing; for singing is the utterance of the heart full of joy; and theirs is the joy of the redeemed. We anticipate it here below when our hearts are drawn out by gratitude, and we sing the sweet songs of Zion in the sanctuary. It is realized in the Christian peasant's cottage, when "the saint, the father, and the husband," and his family, make melody in their hearts to God. Sublime and impressive is the loud anthem which peals from the "great congregation" in this hall. But oh, forget not, dear brethren that it is only those of you who have tasted and seen that the Lord is gracious, and who feel that "they are not their

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own, but bought with a price," whose song of praise to-night rises as sweet incense to heaven, and whose voices shall yet mingle with the "new song" of the glorified around the everlasting throne.

8. Consider *their blessedness*. "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb, which is in the midst of the throne, shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." Their blessedness shall be immensely enhanced by the force of contrast. How sweet is health, after a season of sickness! How sweet to the mariner is the halcyon calm of the morning, which succeeds the stormy night! How sweet the season when winter is past, and the rain is over and gone, and the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in the land! Yet we know that whatever our joys may be in contrast with our sorrows on earth, these sorrows will come back, "the clouds will return after the rain." But there is a world of light and love, whither through grace we hope to come, where trials shall be yours no more, for ever. You have had trials and sorrows; perhaps you have undergone the bitter experience of a backslider's heart, filled with his own ways. Perhaps you have been laid low on a bed of sickness; in the morning you have said, "Would God it were evening!" and in the evening, "Would God it were morning!" There may be some parents here to-night who have been called to part with their little children; others have lost sons and daughters verging on manhood and womanhood,—and some of these, perhaps, without a hope of their being saved, as in the case of Aaron's two sons, or of that rebellious youth, over whom David cried, "Would God I had died for thee!" But when you reach heaven you will be safe yourselves, and you will then acquiesce in the justice of all God's dispensation, and realize the truth of the assurance—"What thou knowest not now, thou shalt know hereafter." Is there a young person here to-night who is called a "saint," and a "fanatic," because of the grace of God that is in him, and who is pointed at in an ungodly family or fellowship? Then to you it is given not only to believe, but to suffer, for the name of Jesus. There have been those who have been burned at the stake, or tortured to death in the inquisitorial cell, or far out on the Scottish moor, where the cairn now marks the martyr's grave, shot down by the bloody dragoons of tyranny. But whatever the trials of God's children have been, they have reached heaven, where God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.

In conclusion. 1. There surely are none here so cold and so indifferent as not to exclaim—"Would that a place of such blessedness were mine!" Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end and final home be like his." But, remember, that the mere wish will never bring you to glory. It is written, "blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God;" and "without holiness no man shall see the Lord." And therefore, we proclaim this night, "ye must be born again." Into the kingdom of God, "nothing that worketh abomination, or maketh a lie, shall ever come." "He that is unjust, (this is the verdict) let him be unjust still; and he that is holy, let him be holy still." Have you any scriptural evidence that, if absent from the body, you would indeed be present with the Lord? Would you take your place, have you reason to believe, among the white-robed, palm-bearing throng? or are you like the multitudes who have gone down to the grave and into eternity with a lie in their right hand—with a passport which, after all, was a forgery, because without the signature of Jesus Christ thereon—inscribed in his own blood? You can never go to heaven, if strangers to repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ. Have you then experienced that godly sorrow which needeth not to be repented of? Are you bringing forth fruits meet to repentance? Are you living by faith in the Son of God, and from him receiving life, and that more abundantly? Are you beginning on earth that holy service of God—that "following of the Lamb" as your leader and shepherd, which shall distinguish and mark the saints in glory? "The Lord knoweth them are his; and let every one that nameth the name of the Lord, depart from iniquity." There can be no heaven without faith; nor without "the fight of faith" shall you ever wave the

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conqueror's palm. I invite you then to embrace the salvation which is offered you without money and without price. "The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord!"

Lastly. Let Christians rejoice that heaven is *not a solitary place*, but the scene of the "communion of saints" in all its glory. God has bestowed on us, my brethren, a social nature. He has given us hearts to love the circle of our family and kindred—hearts to embrace in loving tenderness the community and neighbourhood in which we dwell; and hearts affectionately to yearn over the millions of mankind. And when we reach heaven, will it not be a blessed thing to exercise these social affections in all their fulness? Will it not be sweet to hold converse with patriarchs, prophets, apostles, and martyrs, and all God's people in every age; to renew our intercourse, never to be broken, with those with whom we took sweet counsel as we went to the house of God in company, with those who sat with us partaking of the symbols of the body and blood of a common Lord, and sweeter still to meet fathers and mothers, sisters and brothers, and children beloved, whose spirits are with God, and who, even now seem say, "Come up hither!"

"Oh! for that bright and happy land,
Where far amid the blest,
The wicked cease from troubling,
And the weary are at rest."

"Where friends are never parted,
Once met around thy throne,
And none are broken hearted,
Since all with Thee are one!"

"But oh! till then, watch o'er us keep,
When far from Thee away;
Lord! sooth our spirits when we weep,
And hear us when we pray!"

May God abundantly bless his word for the Redeemer's sake. Amen.
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The following Nos. of the Penny Pulpit contain Sermons delivered at Exeter Hall.

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- 1,701, The Gift of God, by the Hon. and Rev. B. W. Noel, M.A.
- 1,705, The Prodigal's Return, by the Rev. W. Brock.
- 1,706, The City of Refuge, by the Rev. J. Beaumont, M.D.
- 1,710, The Truth, by the Rev. J. Aldis.
- 1,711, Wisdom's Invitation, by the Rev. G. Smith.
- 1,713, Looking to Christ, by the Rev. J. Hamilton, D.D.
- 1,714, Why will ye die? by the Rev. J. Stoughton.
- 1,717, The Gospel, by the Rev. Luke Tyerman.
- 1,718, The Testimonies of God, by the Rev. T. Archer, D.D.
- 1,720—21, The Book for all Nations, and all Times, by the Rev. J. C. Miller.
- 1,724, Salvation, by the Rev. G. Clayton.
- 1,725, The difficulties of speculative Inquiry, by the Rev. J. H. Hinton, A.M.
- 1,727, The Goodness and Love of God, by the Hon & Rev. B. W. Noel, M.A.
- 1,728, The Final Judgment, by the Rev. John Burnet.
- 1,729, The Desire of all Nations, by the Rev. H. Cooke, D.D.
- 1,733, Witnessing to the Truth, by the Rev. C. Stovel.
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- 1,741—42, The Catholicity of the Gospel, by the Rev. J. Dixon, D.D.
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- 1,744, The Righteousness of God, by the Rev. J. Beaumont, M.D.
- 1,747—48, Great Gatherings, by the Rev. J. Stoughton.
- 1,750, The Mystery of Life, by the Rev. G. Smith.
- 1,751, The Brazen Serpent, by the Rev. W. Chalmers.
- 1,752, The Heirs of God, by the Rev. T. Binney.
- 1,756, Christ Head over all things to the Church, by the Rev. J. C. Harrison.
- 1,760, Life in Christ, by Thomas Archer, D.D.

(To be continued.)

LIFE IN CHRIST.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, AUGUST 3, 1851,

BY THOMAS ARCHER, D.D.,

AT EXETER HALL.

"This is the record that God hath given to us eternal life; and this life is in his Son."—
1 John v. 11.

THE Epistle from which I have selected the theme of present meditation, may be emphatically described as the Letter of Love, and the writer of it emphatically distinguished as the Apostle of Compassion. Nothing is more remarkable in the author of this Epistle than the intense and absorbing devotion which he bore to his blessed Master, and to the church of which he himself was an eminent minister. Whatever the work which came from his pen—and none was more varied in style and productiveness than that of John; love was the grand burden and spirit of the sentiments which he was anxious to urge upon the Christian church, the great feature of Christian character which he sought to impress. If we look to the variety of his productions, and trace in one the simplicity of gospel history narrated by him, or if we look to the Epistle that lies before us, or if we take the fiery burning vigour of his marvellous Apocalyptic writing, we find that the one great point in view in all, is to exalt the character of his Lord, and deepen the practical influence of the cross of Him who died for man. He lived for the honour of his blessed Lord. His was a deep burning jealousy for the purity of his adherents, that purity being bound up with the character of his Master—earnest solemn concern for the world of perishing souls, and these things appear in every page of his writings. Around him lay the world dead; not a city merely, but a whole globe; not bodies perishing for want of food, from plague, or by pestilence; but spirits hurrying on to eternity without one ray of hope, or one element of everlasting life, conveyed to them—all these started before his vision—and in surveying them, his heart was inspired with pity for the perishing. But, one remedy appeared, and only one. If the question had been pressed on his attention, is there any hope for a world dying for lack of knowledge, and dying to all eternity? his own mind, if it looked only to itself, might say no! no hope for that dying scene; but he turned to the cross of Christ, thought of what he himself had become by its power, and in the energy of its exhaustless resources, brought out the glorious statement now before me—"This is the record that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son."

Mark now the grammatical form. The statement, is not part of the record, but "the record" itself; as if God had given none else. "This is the record," standing out alone in its palmy sublime grandeur. "This is the record," that transcends and eclipses all others by its brilliancy, upon which every conscience might rest, but without whose application none could be saved. So in the second chapter of his first Epistle, and the twenty-fifth verse, he uses exactly the same grammatical and emphatic expression—"This is the

promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life;" as if not a single star shone in the firmament above except this; as if not one promise had been given except this, standing out distinct, full, alone in hopes and comfort to all. And not only he, but the Apostle Paul, so different in the characteristic order of intellect uses, the same kind of expression:—"The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." Romans vi. 23; "the gift," as if no other boon had been granted;—the gift towering out above all, and standing in its holy Alpine grandeur, the noblest blessing God had ever given to his people. Put the three passages together—my text, the twenty-fifth verse of John's first Epistle, and that passage which I have quoted in the Romans, and then we have brought before us this glorious truth, that he is emphatically the gift, the record to us, the promise of God of life eternal through his Son. Here I may so speak, the heart of God seems to concentrate; or rather, speaking after the manner of men, I may say here the heart of God exhausts itself in the gushing stream of affection, which with the gift of his own Son connects everlasting life. Here, my brethren, the resources of divine love are fully developed; here we see the omnipotence of the mercy of God, and the mercy of God's omnipotence in the cross of the Redeemer.

Let us now look, in a few simple statements, into the following points:—
What is the gift? What is the body of the record?

I. THE RELIGION WHICH WE PROFESS, TRUE PRACTICAL CHRISTIANITY, LIFE. This truth lies at the foundation of this passage; and what type can be more glorious of good conferred! The most despised creature upon earth clings to life. Look at that poor, squalid outcast woman, whom everybody spurns—shrinks from, and passes by as a pestilence. Now and then, it may be, the thought comes across her brain, it is better for me to die than to be a degraded, outcast thing. Yet to life she still clings; miserable, despised, it may be, but still it is life—and "a living dog is better than a dead lion." Mark the words in Job—"Skin for skin, all that a man hath will he give for his life," upon the ground of its value. In the country of Idumea, where Job lived, skins were the media of commerce. Now, a man is about to die, death is standing by his side, it is the man's wish to retain life—skin upon skin, acre upon acre, sovereign upon sovereign—all that he hath, even to the very last, will he give for his life, even if he must exist in poverty and filthy rags! See that man who has determined to put an end to his life; he casts himself into the deep, and is about to perish; a spar, an oar is thrown out, and all his past desperation of life is over; and he clings to the help thrown to him, that he may escape the grave into which he has desired to plunge;—such is the tenacity with which he clings to existence, and such the deep feeling we have in regard to its value, that if the man dies, a coroner's inquest sits upon him, and in most cases brings in a verdict of "temporary insanity." And why? Because it is the general impression, that none but a madman would close his own existence, a suicide being intellectually or morally insane.

Of course, I need not say, that *the life here spoken of, is not physical life*, not a life in common with an ungodly man, not a life in common with the beasts that perish, and that cannot think; but the life of which John speaks is *spiritual life*, it is life in a living man, a *life in the soul*, life in the thinking elements of our nature, life in that part of our nature which links us with God himself, and which, if lost, consigns us to everlasting ruin.

Such then is the boon; *the Christian lives*. My brethren, religion is no dead thing; it is not formalism, it is not mere professionalism, it is not the assent of the understanding to certain dogmas, it is not the experience in the heart even of certain sentimental emotions. Religion, if it be anything at all, is a living, practical reality. I cannot define it; but who can define life? The embryo child in the womb begins to flutter; where is the life there? The man begins to think and to reason; where is the intellectual life there? Where is its seat? and what the mode of its exercise? Ask the anatomist, clear-headed, and intelligent, as he may be, and he will tell you that life moves, life speaks, life acts, life thinks, life enjoys, and is sad. But this is no explanation of life, it is the mere assertion of the phenomena of life;

is not the evolution of the elementary nature of itself. *But I know I live*; no man can reason me out of that conviction. I walk, therefore I live; I speak, therefore I live; I think, therefore I live—*because I feel, I AM*. Exactly so it is here in the spiritual life, the believer's heart. I cannot define how it comes; perhaps I cannot tell when it comes, or the particular manner in which it is sustained, but no man can reason me out of the logic of experience. I have the conviction that I have spiritual life, because I think with God, I feel the presence of God, I move in the ways of God, I think with joy when He is with me; and in that conviction, I have that which can silence all the sophistry that would try to reason me out of a belief in that spiritual existence.

The Christian then, lives; that life may be mysterious, but it is the *distinguishing character of the Christian man that he has this spiritual life in him*. Tell me not that you are acquainted with all the controversial dogmata of ancient time, for that is not Christianity. Tell me not that you have some spiritual quiverings—these are not Christianity. There may be a spasmodic, galvanic action of the heart for a moment, only to sink down into spiritual death. Nay, it never got out of spiritual death; it never lived. It resembled a body galvanized into the horrid contortions and mimicry of life, where there is no life, sustained not progressive inanimation. The semblance of life is supported only for a moment to pass into spiritual monotony and death.

I have now commented, as I went along, upon this spiritual life, as a real thing. I add that it is, moreover, a *progressive thing*. Here religion harmonizes with all the phenomena and rules of life. Who could imagine when he sees that little boy nestling in his mother's lap, that he would possess all the energy and majesty of a giant form—or in that little girl, whose features are scarcely formed, there should be developed all the features of feminine beauty and loveliness? Take brain life! The child has *instinct*, that is stereotyped *reason*, for such, I presume, is the correct idea of *instinct*—it is reason, but reason not advancing, confined within certain limits, beyond which it cannot go. The bee has fixed instinct; reasons which it does not go beyond. The elephant and beaver having stereotyped reason, the knowledge of means to an end, but out of the routine of such action they never pass. Look now at man's brain life. The instinct with which the child clings to its mother's bosom, for the food and support of life does not stop there, but rises to a higher point of existence. It strikes the table with a spoon, producing a sound, it strikes it again to get the sound repeated. It then advances step by step, until this little sleeping, slumbering infant, starts forth a Chalmers, thundering with his eloquence, or a Newton, ascertaining, fixing the laws of universe of God. Such is the Christian's life, it is real, spiritual, practical, energetic, and progressive life. Am I growing? is the question which every man, woman, and child should ask. Am I growing in Christian life? Some twenty or thirty years ago, I made a profession of faith in the gospel. Is it more practical and more perfect now than it was then? Twenty or thirty years ago I felt a thrill of love toward God in my heart; is that love the same now, or is it more burning and energetic than it was then! Ah! may not the opposite of the question be put? May it not be said of many now hearing me—may it not be said of myself, grey hairs are here and there upon us, and we know it not! Have we even remained where we were? Has not our perception of spiritual truth become weaker and more feeble? Almighty God, in thy mercy and by thy Spirit, send home these questions for self-conviction and reformation!

II. THIS LIFE IS DIVINE IN ITS ORIGIN—"God hath given to us eternal life." This fact is continually asserted. The prophet stands upon a peak in that ridge which surrounds the valley of dry bones, and the question is addressed—"Can these bones live?" No answer can he give. The command is addressed from heaven that he is to prophecy to these dry, dead bones, and when he prophesied, the Spirit of God came upon them, and they lived and stood up a great army. All life is of Divine production. I need not remind my young friends of certain books in modern times, such as that of Strauss, and the Theory and History of Development; that in those works an attempt

has been made to demonstrate this, that life, organized, active sentient life, is the result of certain laws, and that these laws acting, produce life as a final effect. At first, there are certain things called *autochthons*, self-formed individuals, little gelatinous masses, moved by electro galvanic power, and led by law to lacteal trees, where they are nourished. It is a radical objection to such a theory as this that it is not within the range of observation and experience. We have never seen it at work. But granting that these effects are the result of certain laws, then the question comes, where is the lawgiver? All law implies one who imposes it. All productions involve an origination, and without such a lawgiver, and such an origination, these laws could never have existed, these principles never have been developed. We are therefore thrown back upon a divine original—the living God. Pierced as far as you may into eternity, the deeper and closer our examination of its realities, the more fully and simply are we thrown on our conviction of their Divine origin.

We see then, dear friends, that all life is the production of the eternal God. The spiritual life of which I speak is, therefore, certainly of his production. Ministers of the gospel, (if any are hearing me,) you can sympathize with me in this statement, that labour to preach the Divine truth—the word of God with all effect as we may, so far as external influences are concerned, make a congregation weep now and then, electrify and waken them into deep emotion, you have no power of giving them life. I will take the case of Dr. Chalmers. Those who have read his works, especially that Address which he gave to the parishioners of Kilmany, when he was leaving for Glasgow—must remember the confession which he there makes—a confession, I can hardly call it; it is rather a record of experience than a confession of any short-coming—that so far as he knew in his preaching for a long period, he had not made one single convert—why? What was the ground of that mighty change which occurred in the history of that great man? The ground was this—for a long period he had laboured without the power of the spirit accompanying him; but from the moment Divine influence rested upon his own heart, from that moment the eloquence which had hitherto moved none, now startled masses, and converted thousands. Such to some extent, is the experience of every Christian man. The old Greek fable, myth, to use the fashionable expression of modern times, brings out the truth in a simple shape—"You may take a man, and set him up by the pillar of the temple, but unless the god who inhabits it touches him he cannot move a step." Or according to another Greek fable, you may take clay, and form and fashion it into the mould of a man, but unless the celestial fire penetrates the frame, and imparts life, it has no power of action. "Paul may plant, and Apollos may water, but God gives the increase." All means and appliances are in vain, until the power of God himself shall visit the church—all in vain, until Jesus Christ, who when his message is proclaimed, shall accompany that message with his own living power, and waken up dead spirits into eternal life. Teachers of Sabbath schools, and ministers from country villages or districts, now hearing me, let me beseech you to remember that this life is a Divine gift; but it is a life which we may obtain, and which is sure to be obtained in answer to believing, energetic prayer. The gift is free, and the old English expression is not more simple than true—"What is freer than a gift?" It is a gift: not a thing which we deserve in any form or degree; bestowed by His hand who died to secure it. Dead souls, I address you. Dead spirit! with a conscience perverted, a will ill-directed—dead so far as eternity, as the service of the living God is concerned, yet possessing powers of volition, with a power of conscience and a power of reasoning—dead spirit, I appeal to thee! I ask, why continue in that condition? Why remain in that state of torpor and lethargy, which, if you continue in it, will end in certain destruction? The power of the living God is free, the promise of the living God is full, and the energy of God is waiting to bless you. There is the pool: it has begun to move; the angel has come down; now step you in. The light from heaven is struggling with the darkness of your hearts, pray with all anxiety and earnestness for the application

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of the Spirit to yourselves. Perhaps some wife has a husband, who is spiritually dead, or some husband a wife who is spiritually dead. I may be addressing some in that condition, and I can imagine no condition more terrible in its prospective character. Just think of it. That man and that woman have lived and loved each other with all conceivable tenderness upon earth, they have passed to the judgment-seat of the great God; one is now upon the right hand, and the other upon the left, casting a long, lingering look over the wide chasm which separates them, and shall separate them to all eternity. I may address some in that category. I may address some one who has an ungodly, reprobate child—pray, wrestle, energize with God to awaken that child from its state, that the spiritual death of that wife, of that husband, of that child, may be superseded and followed by the gift of everlasting life. It will be given in answer to prayer. It may be that you have struggled, that you are struggling to-day, that you will struggle to-morrow, for weeks or for years, and yet that life has not appeared. Still continue to pray, still struggle before God, and in due time, at the moment perhaps when you least expect it, the Holy Spirit will come down, the Divine life will be completed in the heart!

III. THIS LIFE IS IN CHRIST. The source, I say, of that life which is the gift of God, the source of all life, is Christ himself. This is continually asserted in that singular chapter, the first chapter of St. John's Gospel—one of the most singular to the student of Greek literature perhaps ever produced—Christ is discovered as the life of man. In the fifth chapter of that gospel we are told by Christ himself, "they shall hear my voice." My own impression is, that this expression does not refer to the resurrection of the dead body, but to the resurrection of the dead soul—the dead mind which never loved, never served Christ, never knew the power of God, but which now hears the voice and begins to live. In like manner it is said, he came that he might give life, and that they who had it, might have it more abundantly.

Again, for this purpose he is described as *having life in himself*. Mark the emphatic expression. What is the meaning of it? Is it asserted that he has life in himself as we have life in ourselves? No, no; there would be no emphasis, no peculiarity, no force in such an expression. It corresponds with that expression of the living God, "I am that I am"—Jehovah; the self-produced, if I may use the expression, and the self-sustained, the independent, the self-existent, and all-glorious God—that being who was when no object existed. Christ, in like manner, has life in himself; and the life that belongs to him has this peculiarity, he is able to impart it to others, being the source and fountain of all spiritual life, life legal, that is life from the sentence of death. O when I stand on yonder calcareous hill, and look at the scenes of Calvary, I see three beings upon three crosses expiring there. I look at two: I see in one the writhing contortions of fiendish despair, in the other a sort of calmness produced by a voice that fell upon his ear; but in the middle I see that being, who at the very moment was rolling back the guilt of man, and the indignation of Almighty God, and bringing down peace and salvation upon the fallen earth. Mark, therefore, how continually these references to life are bound up with Christ. If I go back to Ezekiel xlvi. 9, I find a specific reference to the point—a chapter gemmed in light and sparkling with a dewy sunny brightness—"every thing shall live where the river cometh;" every plant shall flourish, every tree shall live, where the river cometh. Glorious truth! It is the same water that can purify you that can purify the Hindoo; it is the same spiritual sunbeam that enlightens you that can enlighten the Malay; it is the same dew that comes on the corn, brings out the colour of the dahlia, and the fragrance of the rose, and swells the grapes of the vintage. The same river enriches all that grows upon its banks. So with the spiritual river, it brings out the fervent purity of the one, the gentle grace of another, the sturdy energy of a third, and the manly action of a fourth. The same living power clustering and working in the hearts of the utmost variety, produces the most varied of fruit. Of the river to which we have referred, Ezekiel says in the first verse of the 47th chapter, that it came out of "the right side of the house, at the south side of the altar."

Mark the emphatic expression. The river flows in conjunction with sacrifice; it is a river which flows from an altar, and that altar is the one on which our blessed Lord was offered up a holocaust by the Father, to justice, and yet to mercy. Or if I were to go back to the Apocalypse and take the homogeneous vision which is prescribed by John in the 22nd chapter, verses 1-3, the very same truth appears:—"And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and of either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. And there shall be no more curse; but the throne of God and of the Lamb." Not from the mastery of the eternal God alone, but from the *Lamb's own throne*, Brethren, that river, pure as it is, is tinged with blood—the Messianic blood of his own dear child; and the life which you receive now, though the gift of God, streams in conjunction with Christ's death and exaltation. Methinks I am at Jerusalem now: a few people are met together in an upper chamber: they are entering on a great work. I go to that Pharisee, to that Roman, or to that Greek, and say there is the new plan that will overthrow all the superstition of false philosophy, grapple with all eloquence, and overcome the sophistry of men, they would tell me, "You are mad; What do these few poor fishermen and publicans expect to revolutionize Rome, Greece, and Egypt; to overturn systems established for thousands of years?" and were, therefore, men to be regarded as fitter for scorn and pity than for persecution, the sword and the gibbet. Yet a few days passed; Christ is now gone to heaven; methinks I see him entering, as John saw the angels standing round the crystal battlements, no more a man of sorrows but a triumphant warrior. The gates of heaven are thrown open to him, and he enters with the calm self-possession of a finished victor. The Holy Ghost suspended hitherto over the throne of God is now set free, and at that moment the dew drops of spiritual life descend in a pentecostal shower, and those men hitherto ignorant and unenlightened, rude, and half barbarians, are made able orators, nerved with titanic power, which sent them forth with a living energy to the conquest of the whole earth. *Life is now given*; the redemption was now complete; the triumph had now been won, and the Spirit descended upon the church to confirm the wonders of the pentecostal day. Brethren, pray for this gift, but pray for it in union with Christ's sacrifice, for without his blood the stream had never flowed, and without his death the Spirit never had come down.

IV. I might here add a fourth head, which, however, I will only just mention another thought bound up in this passage is, that **THIS LIFE IS NOT ONLY THROUGH THE SON, BUT IS IN THE SON, AND WILL JUST BE IN HIM AS IT IS IN HIM.** In other words, the character of the *life of the Son of God is a model character to all the brotherhood of Christ*; every Christian is a Christian just in the degree that he is Christ-like. Am I asked the question, what is a Christian man? My answer is, not a Wesleyan, not an Episcopalian, not an Independent, not a Baptist, not a Presbyterian. Am I asked who is not a Christian; I may say that one may be a Christian who is a Roman Catholic or a Socinian—(I say it fearlessly, and honestly, but humbly, every man has a right to speak his own opinion)—a man may be better in heart than his profession—a man may be a more true and genuine Christian with many mere physical errors and absurdities, than one with the most pure orthodox faith, but yet with a life unharmonized with the gospel of the Redeemer. Many have carried a good creed in a bad heart, and many a man also carries a bad creed in a good one. A man with the purest Calvinist creed may be an unchristian man, and a man untouched by the Spirit of God. Just take the question, what is Christianity—what is the true simple idea of the divine orthodoxy; it is not logical subtlety, it is not strict denominationalism—but **TRUE GENUINE CHRISTIANITY IS CHRIST IN THE MAN—Christ breathing in my breath; Christ living in my life; Christ thinking in my brain;** Christ

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working out in my actions. Give me that man, whether he be a Pascal or a Fenelon in the Roman Catholic Church, or a Channing among the Socinians, who is trying to rise up to Christ, living for Christ, and seeking to obey Christ's commands—and while I lament that they are not more with me on some points, still I rejoice for the good there is in them, and must class them among the true disciples and followers of the Saviour.

V. THIS LIFE, THIS DIVINE GIFT, IS ETERNAL.

We have seen, in the progress of these examinations, that this life is a life in the soul. *Now the soul is eternal, and as such, therefore, this life must endure for ever.* I am aware that some who have written on this subject have sought to bring out this idea—that the expression "eternal life" is a Hebraism—that just as the "tree of life," is a most valuable tree, and as the "water of life" is a most valuable water, so this life, signifies a life of the most valuable kind. But I see no reason for such an interpretation. The words strikingly show that this life shall endure for ever. That man is a fool who tries to procure something by great labour, which will last only till to-morrow; and that man is wise who endeavours, even by great labour, to obtain something which will endure throughout his life. But this eternal life is therefore the more valuable, as it never comes to a close. A man may die bodily, but the soul never. The oak, whose deep and heavy shadows are cast over the tombs of many generations, itself may moulder away. The ship whose planks have been cut from the forest, from the oak that now stands alone, may perish amid the surges of the deep, or rot and die away more lingeringly—that sea itself which envelopes it shall be no more, and the period shall come when the whole earth shall be as one molten sheet of liquid fire, and over all—over the funeral pile of nature—the spirit shall live, gazing upon the material universe, witnessing the destruction of the different orders of the works, while itself is living in the bosom of its blessed Master—living in peace, in serenity, in light, and in joy for ever and ever. Such is your destiny!

Moreover it is a life which shall expand. I can set no limits to it. I can find none. Eternal God! what an elevation shall flow from dwelling in thy presence—what sublimity in a life with thee—fully developed and all-glorious like thine own. What, my dear friends, must Luther be in heaven? What the seraphic sweetness of Melancthon's temper? What the energy of the Apostle Peter, now no longer veiled in the flesh and liable to temptation? What the tenderness of the writer of this passage, who, when the light of heaven was fully, quietly, and gently upon his eye, and just upon the very verge of eternity, gave his last message in these words, "Little children love one another." What the clear views of the shrewd John Wesley in heaven, now free from the imperfections and clouds of earth? What the burning eloquence of Whitefield as he now speaks and sings the great Redeemer's praise? What, when the acorn shall burst into the oak of heaven? What, when the life of earth shall merge into the magnificence and grandeur of the life above? What, when the intellect now warped shall stand forth in all its grandeur, and hearts now cold shall burn with love, and the eye shall pierce into the bosom of the eternal with the glance of a lynx, which now it dare not attempt, realizing the full development of the spiritual character of that glorious gift, of which you have obtained only the first droppings upon our earth. That gift is life, and Christianity consists in the possession of it. That spiritual life is the divine gift—the gift of God. The channel through which it comes is the blood of Jesus Christ. It is life through him. The model upon which that life is formed, is the character of Christ himself. Like the giver, this life is immortal and unchangeable. One point remains—

VI. WHO HAVE THAT LIFE?

What man possesses it? Who has a distinct credential that he does possess it? In the fifth chapter of Hebrews the Apostle brings out the answer:—"And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him." I would urge—"made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him." Not the Calvinist pure in creed, nor the Arminian pure in creed, nor the Episcopalian, nor the Wes-

leyan, nor the Independent, nor the Baptist, nor the Presbyterian—but “*those who obey him*.” Throw not yourself back on the question, “Is my orthodoxy strictly and purely scriptural? Is my denomination rigid?” But ask this question—“Do I obey Christ?” Have I power to say, “He is the author of eternal life to me?” If I do not, no matter what the purity of my creed, or the character of those with whom I am linked in church-fellowship. Tell me not of spasmodic enjoyments of spiritual elevation, occasional paroxysms of spiritual life, when you seem to have reached the third heavens, and “whether in the body or out of the body you cannot tell.” I ask is Christ’s life in you? Is his law in your hearts, and is it exemplified in your lives? If so, you have clear proof of the possession of that gift which is everlasting.

Look forward to the full development of this life in your own experience in the eternal state. You may have struggles and difficulties now—still severe—and if you do so—if you endeavour to carry out those great principles which I have urged in giving life to others—many of you are from the country—many from places, where there are whole masses of dead souls around about you untouched, unimpressed, dropping to eternal perdition; seek to bring, so far as you can, life upon them; and oh! the rapture and joy of being instrumental in doing this great work! A man is drowning, and seems drowned; we take him out of the water and apply to him all the remedies which skill and affection can suggest, we rub him, and by the friction endeavour to restore suspended animation to the frame. It may be that we have almost ceased to hope, but we affectionately desire; at length we see something like the opening of the eye-lids; by and bye the tongue regains its power, and the first utterance is—“Thank God! Thank you!” Oh! the joy of that moment, when suspended life is restored to the frame! Oh! what a thrill of rapture shall come to the believer’s heart in the eternal state, when some soul shall approach him in the presence of God, and thus accost him—“My spirit was once on the verge of perdition, but was brought home to everlasting life through thy efforts!” Having thus obtained this life yourselves, endeavour to carry it out to all around you—to all your homes, and in the towns in which you live, which may God grant for his name’s sake. Amen.

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A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY EVENING, AUGUST 3, 1851,

BY THE REV. JOHN ALDIS,

AT EXETER HALL.

"Now is the judgement of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out."—
John xii. 31.

The subject upon which I purpose speaking to-night will require, on your part, two things—first, an intelligent recognition of scripture language; for as the topics about which the Bible speaks are peculiar, so likewise is its language peculiar—no further peculiar, however, than the peculiarity of the subject demands, and yet so far peculiar; and only those familiar with the language of the Bible will be apt to understand, or to enter into the meaning and spirit of the representation contained in the text. Equally necessary will it be that you should exercise faith in the great peculiarities of the Bible—in those doctrines by which it is distinguished from the world's philosophy and usage. There are some elementary points of natural religion—there are other matters appealing to the instincts of conscience, and others affecting the ordinary pursuits of life, and which are patent to all the world. There are truths exhibited in the Bible, and no where else—truths which must be borne in mind, and recognized with a loving faith before the representation of the text can be either understood or enjoyed.

Premising thus much with regard to these words as exhibited in the text, we shall notice—

- I. THE CONDITION AND THE SPIRITUAL DOMINATION OF THE WORLD.
- II. THE CORRECTION OF THAT CONDITION, AND THE OVERTHROW OF THAT DOMINATION, BY THE DEATH OF JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD.

First, then, let us consider the condition and the spiritual domination of the world. But we must remark on the restricted sense in which we use this word. The term "world" is used, in the scriptures, in various senses: it sometimes designates time, the duration of man's existence; it is said concerning those who commit the sin against the Holy Ghost, that their sin shall not be forgiven them, "neither in this world, nor in that which is to come." Sometimes it depicts the ordinary lot of humanity—for as we "brought nothing into this world, if certain we can carry nothing out." Sometimes it is used to indicate the pursuits of this present life—"They that use this world as not abusing it; for the fashion thereof passeth away;" but most frequently it points to human nature as such, unregenerate and unsaved by the blood and merit of Jesus Christ our Lord—"The children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light"—"Ye are of this world; I am not of this world"—"Be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind"—"Marvel not if the world hate you; ye know that it hated me

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before it hated you"—“Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.”

It is in this restricted sense, then, that we use the term now, speaking neither of the natural phenomena which constitute the world around, nor of human life, as such; but of humanity as considered, and represented in the Bible, and as Christ here speaks of it, evidently as in a state of condemnation. Then he says, “Now is the judgment of this world. Now is the Prince of this world cast out.” This is the view then, that the Saviour takes of the condition of human beings; and it is at once restricted and peculiar to himself. We cannot understand it unless we have the mind of Christ. We cannot sympathize with it unless we have something of the heart of Christ. There are many views which it is possible to take of this present world of ours, generally speaking; there are some, for example, who consider only the material universe delighting to look abroad on the green and flowery earth, on the bright blue sea, on the infinite and glorious heavens—on the trees, herbs, fruits, and flowers—on the beasts that roam, on the birds that fly, on the reptiles that creep in the dust or mire—on the fishes that skim the shallows, or float in the bosom of the deep—on the light, the clouds, the rain, the dew, and on the ten thousand objects which the eye can gaze upon—wherewith man regales his senses, and refreshes his spirit—gazing on the grandeur as it comes fresh from the hand of God, bearing the impress of his order, goodness, and power; and this, brethren, is a glorious world. We may well love and admire it. It is our duty to be grateful for it, and to be glad in it. Some look upon man only in his social condition. They observe humanity organized in the harmonious and effective development of all its energies. They contemplate men in nations, with their rulers, their laws, their manners, their customs, their revenues, their armies, and their fleets. They look at their palaces, their houses, their wharves, and their shops. They consider their literature, their science, their art, and their philosophy, their style of dress and their mode of living, their pastimes and their duties. They consider the eager multitudes of men banded together in the strange pursuit of pleasure, of honour, and of emolument. They can see nothing in this world but humanity so conditioned. They find nothing whereof to report, and about which to think and feel, but the world as I have thus described it. This, however, is not the view which our blessed Saviour takes of this world, nor the view which he would consequently have us take of it. He sees man in his moral and spiritual relations, turning from that which is outward and material, to that which is hidden in the deepest recesses of the human soul. He did not allow himself to be detained from his mission of mercy by the splendours of heaven, and he could not allow himself to be diverted therefrom, for a moment, by any of the beauties which earth can exhibit, still less was he distracted, and turned aside by the mere workings of humanity, which at best, are often but a mere tinsel show,—an extravagant pretence—and, not, unfrequently, at once the product of sin, and the instruments of the Arch Fiend. No! He looked at man's moral and spiritual condition—beyond their philosophies, beyond their creeds—at their motives, at the objects at which they aimed, at the passions by which they were stirred, at the law by which they were guided, at their conduct, their spirit, and actions in relation to God, to his service and government, and in relation to man in all his conflicting interests and pursuits; and he saw all this closely and clearly—nothing was hidden from the glance of his eye; however disguised, he saw them all, just as they were, calmly and truly. He had no sordid interest in them, no perverting sympathy with them, and no forestalling prejudice in relation to them. Christ sees them as God sees them.

And he declared that their opinions were error and delusion, their philosophies and creeds were falsehood and fiction, their motives corruption, and their actions crimes. As he looked on this present life with its unregeneracy and unbelief, his soul was filled with mingled loathing and distress, and turning to heaven he said—“Oh righteous Father the world have not known thee;” and then turning to his disciples, he said—“Marvel not if the world hate you, for

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ye know that it hated me before it hated you." It was on this high ground he stood when he said, "Now is the judgment of this world. Now shall the Prince of this world be cast out."

There is a second principle, not less strikingly a Christian doctrine; it is the *spiritual domination* of this world. If the condition of this world was such as to demand judgment—that is domination and rectification—that condition is connected with a spiritual domination which the scriptures so constantly affirm, though it is not so frequently found that men delight to contemplate and acknowledge it. The representation is that this world, as we have explained it, is under the domination of a Prince, who is here called, "The Prince of this World," and whose overthrow and destruction the Saviour contemplated and in all his labours endeavoured to secure. I say this doctrine is peculiar to the Bible. I admit, too, that it often shocks the world's philosophy, and hence many are disposed to explain it away and speak of it as a figure of speech—an oriental hyperbole—an extravagant impersonation. But it is no such thing. The language of the New Testament is as plain and as dogmatic on this subject as it is on any subject; and any other interpretation or view than that which we have given, would go far to pervert the meaning of language, and to destroy it altogether. It would impute either folly or falsehood to the blessed Jesus himself. No! we recognize the simple declaration of the Bible on this subject, and wish that the recognition of it were universal, hearty, deep felt, practical, and abiding. It is a revelation of that which the senses cannot discern, and about which mere reason cannot decide—which none but the omniscient God can know or make known, and which nothing but Christian faith can apprehend or employ. This is exhibited to us in the teaching of Christ, and of his apostles, most uniformly, without hesitation, and without comment. It is from first to last connected with the life and conduct of our blessed Redeemer; and it is as necessary to bear this in mind, as it is to bear in mind the fact of the Incarnation. This will go far to explain much mystery, and unfold many purposes since developed.

He went from his baptism, and the descent of the Spirit, into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. Christ uniformly recognized all those maladies which tortured the bodies and deranged the minds of men, as connected with Satanic power, and as the working out of Satanic results. He said to the Pharisees, "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do." When he described the introduction of moral evil into the world, he said the tares were the children of the wicked one, and he who sowed them the devil. His own sufferings in death were connected with this spiritual agency, when he encountered not merely that physical darkness in which all nature was wrapt, but that deeper darkness which came over his soul when he said, "This is your hour, and the power of darkness." The Apostle Paul held the same doctrine—he says, "If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost, in whom the God of this world hath blinded the eyes of them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel should shine in unto them." He looked at such as were the legitimate objects of apostolic labours, prayer and zeal, and he said "the man of God must not strive, but with meekness instruct those who oppose themselves; for peradventure they may recover themselves from the snare of the devil, by whom they are led captive at his will." He looked at them who were weak in the Corinthian church, and he said "I fear lest, by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve, through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ." He assigned as a reason for promoting harmony, lest Satan should gain an advantage over us. "He that committeth sin is of the devil, and we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness."

It is plainly, therefore, the doctrine of the Bible that man is fallen, guilty, and depraved—that he is also responsible, and must give an account. There is, however, an invisible spiritual agency, not interfering with his own free agency, but identified with, and interested in all the works of evil in this world. It is the passion, purport, and effort of the Prince of the Power of the Air to secure the results which, in connexion with the lives of wicked men, are daily ex-

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hibited to our view. Hence they are said to be his children, who bear his image, and they his slaves who do his work. Thus the power of evil manifests itself in this fallen world of ours. Thus the Divine Redeemer regarded it, and thus he would have us regard it. Thus he treated it, and thus he would have us treat it. We cannot indeed understand the scriptures fully until we obtain a knowledge of this doctrine. We cannot ascertain the worth and power of the Saviour's death till we recognize this doctrine; for it was in connexion with it he said—"Now is the judgment of this world. Now shall the Prince of this world be cast out."

But this truth is further illustrated by the constant reference, in the scriptures, to the spiritual conflict by which all evil is to be subdued, and the good ultimately to be rendered triumphant. Whether you consider the life of Christ, the doctrines of his religion, or the character of his servants, you will find this conflict runs through the whole history of the church, and the triumphant issue of that conflict is the blessed and glorious goal to which the church is tending. When the Redeemer appeared among the sinful sons of men, he was presented to all as the avowed contrast to, the everlasting antagonist of, the powers of evil. An inspired writer tells us that this was his mission, and upon it he expended the energies of his life. "For this purpose was the Son of God manifested that he might destroy the works of the devil." We see in the whole of his course that this fact was exemplified. This was the key which must interpret all that is mysterious in connexion with the temptation in the wilderness—explaining the form of that temptation.

This, after all, has its moral, and its grand import—that Christ and the powers of evil are essentially opposite, and everlasting foes, and that the conflict between them must continue till Christ has won the victory. Hence after he has described the introduction of evil by the parable of the tares, he says, "An enemy hath done this," but be assured then of the issue—that at the harvest the tares should be gathered up and bound in bundles for the flames.

When he gave his disciples power to work miracles, he said, "I give you power over the enemy;" and when they returned triumphant, he said, "I saw Satan fall as lightning from heaven." And when he went forth to the last scenes of suffering, and sacrificial death, he said the "Prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me." When this spiritual dispensation shall have overcome all other dispensations, he declared that the Spirit of truth should come and "convince the world of sin, of righteousness and of judgment; of sin, because they believe not on me; of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; of judgment, because the Prince of this world is judged." The same doctrine was unfolded in the case of the apostles. To Saul of Tarsus when converted, and when he had received his commission, Christ said, "I will send thee far hence to the Gentiles." And multitudes believed, and turned unto God; they were all engaged in one work—the promulgation of the blessed gospel—they looked on that as the great spiritual conflict, concerning which the apostle said, "They wrestled not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, and against the rulers of the darkness of this world; against spiritual wickedness in high places." And the command there given to his own followers is—"Resist the devil and he will flee from you."

When this promise shall be fulfilled, God shall bruise Satan under his feet; the Bible reveals the beginning and the blessed end to this strange conflict. In addition, when sin had as yet not done its work—when death had not seized its prey—when every leaf was green, and faded not—when the fruit clustered in the trees, and the flowers shed forth their perfume—when the streams were unruffled by storms, and the skies unclouded—when all above and beneath was serene in innocence and in happiness—then the serpent beguiled Eve, "and she did eat." In the Revelations we have a representation that "there was war in heaven; that Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, and prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he

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was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. "And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony: and they loved not their lives unto the death."

II. Let us advert to THE CORRECTION OF THIS CONDITION, AND THE OVERTHROW OF THIS DOMINATION, BY THE DEATH OF CHRIST.

This is implied rather than expressed in the words of our text; and yet it is so implied that we may all readily comprehend it, and confidently embrace it as the doctrine of the text. Christ evidently teaches that this result was to be secured by his taking possession of a new power, and that this new power would accrue to him from his death for man's transgressions. This is taught in the text itself, as well as both before and after it. In the preceding verse he says: "This voice came not because of me, but for your sakes." In the verse immediately following the text he says: "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me;" and this is the doctrine of the New Testament. The great apostle of the Gentiles says—"I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth." In another place he teaches that Christ humbled himself, "became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." "Wherefore he also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, and every tongue confess that he is the Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

This, then, is the doctrine of the text, that Christ conquered when he fell, taking possession of this power by which Satan is cast out in connection with his death upon the cross; and it is to the illustration of this principle that we now refer.

First: This was most clearly and fully publishing the perfect law of righteousness, and therefore Christ could say, "Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the Prince of this world be cast out." This is absolutely necessary for the accomplishment of the result here described. If it be true that where there is no law, there is no transgression, it is equally true, that where there is no proved transgression, there is no judgment. It is astonishing to observe how universally and great the necessity is for the publication of this one perfect law of righteousness. True, good and evil, right and wrong, exist of themselves, apart from the feelings and decisions of men. They must be, immutable and immortal, whether known and recognized or not. They spring out of the law of God's government, and that law springs out of the Divine perfection. Whatever is opposed to his nature is wrong, and whatever is consonant with it is right. There must be a capacity in the soul of man for the recognition of that which is right, and of that which is wrong. Man being originally formed in the Divine image, whatever is in harmony with the Divine nature, must be in harmony with the human constitution.

Nevertheless, this very right or wrong is not perceived by the senses, nor can it be affirmed by the simple decision of the understanding, unaided by revelation, and untutored by the Spirit. Man is not only ignorant, but perverted—not only defective, but wrong. It is astonishing to observe what multiplied, absurd, false, and wicked things, in relation to morals and religion, are regarded and created as reasonable, good, and true. Men perform a thousand actions, in all of which they really serve Satan, while they fancy and say they are doing God service. Instead of compunction there is complacency; he is not only content, but proud. Nothing more fully proves the existence of Satanic agency than this; the mind must be clouded in order that the heart might be at rest.

Such a life as this can lead to no result but misery, and ultimate ruin. The question arises, How can this evil be removed? We say by the publication of this perfect law of righteousness, so that it may be at once understood, felt, and practically acknowledged. That law had been in part exhibited in the works of nature, and on the conscience of man. It had been given in an

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elementary form, written by the finger of God on Sinai's summit. It was republished in a clearer light, with ampler details, and with a more awful sanction in the gospel. Men appeared who were inspired by Divine truth acquainted with the Divine will, who embellished and adorned it by their lives whilst they enforced and recommended the claims of this perfect law. Nevertheless, as yet it had been but imperfectly exhibited at the very best. Its highest meanings had not been unfolded, and its brightest glories were yet beyond the conceptions of man.

Men, therefore, became vain in their imaginations, and corrupt in their lives; they loved, believed, and practised a lie. Truth and duty were a splendid formality, and a pretence. Unrighteousness reigned on every hand; and the world, cursed with its selfishness, pride, tyranny, and cruelty. That selfishness corrupted the soul; that pride decked itself out in the most splendid colours; that tyranny startled the timid, and crushed the weak; that cruelty gloated itself with vengeance, and found a pastime and luxury in the sight of blood. Thus they made complacency of their religion, their pastime, and their joy, and there was nothing successful to expose these errors or rebuke these crimes. Then it was that the sinless Jesus came, proclaiming the law of self-denying benevolence. He went to the uttermost, saying, "Sell all that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven." He taught the doctrine of profound humility—that men should become even as little children taking the last place—in relation to God; that men should pray, as did the Publican—"God be merciful to me a sinner." He also taught the same kind of humility towards one another. "Be not many masters, for one is your Master, even Christ." He exhibited the good Samaritan, and enforced the example by his own conduct, and by the injunction—"Go thou and do likewise," teaching that wherever there is misery on the part of another, there should be generosity on our part—that we should be severe against nothing but sin in others and in ourselves—that we should "pray for them that persecute us, bless them that curse us, and do good to them that despitefully use us." Christ himself, through life, was humble, meek, benevolent, and generous, to the very last. He became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. He was made perfect through suffering, developing the law of the cross most glorious and just; when he died he was numbered with transgressors as one of them and took upon himself the form of a servant, enduring the contradiction of sinners against himself. When he was reviled he reviled not again. He prayed for his murderers even when on the cross, saying, "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do." Then, and not till then, was the perfect law of righteousness revealed from heaven in all its glory. Then it stood forth the contrast and the rebuke of the abominations of the world. It was the unsheathed sword, wherewith the battle shall be fought, and the strife shall be continued till all evil shall be demolished, and Christ shall be all and in all. "Now is the judgment of this world, and now shall the Prince of this world be cast out," because then was set up in its fulness the mediatorial dispensation of Jesus Christ our Lord. I have adverted to this already—that Christ communicates his power as the result of his death upon the accursed tree; that was the Baptism of the doctrine of the cross which is to subdue the world, and to take possession of it for Christ, so as ultimately to overthrow and destroy the spiritual darkness whereby the evil of this world is perpetuated, and the dominion of Satan is maintained. The gospel is designed to meet man in both phases of his character. It meets one with an element of holiness, and the other with an element of hope. Behold the power of Christ to subdue Satan, and possess the world! Men are not only sinners, but strangely eager and determined in their sins. To secure that result they must be pleased, and to be pleased they must be cheated. Their sin must wear a pleasant aspect, and be pleaded for with all the force of passion, and all the arguments of sophistry. It shall be bedizened by art and industry, decked out by the gay, patronized by the high, protected by the powerful, called by a name which hides its monstrous enormity. It shall appeal to the senses, to the temper, to the appetite,

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it shall hush reflection, drown the voice of conscience, stimulate the passions, and kindle the fires of the imagination. Thus man shall be hurried, excited, worn out, and, in a sense, cast into a vortex, in the one case, and in the other, bound as with a spell. Men love the world and all the evil it contains. Such is the power which enslaves them, and what shall dissolve that spell, break up that power, and revoke that curse? I reply simply and at once—the cross of Jesus Christ our Lord. Morality, reason, and philosophy are poor and powerless here, as the moon beams on the floating iceberg or descending avalanche; they may convince the understanding but they cannot convert the heart. But when men can look to the cross of Christ they become crucified to the world. Their love of sin becomes overthrown and destroyed. This is not a question of theory; it is a question altogether of experience, and one who did experience it said, "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." Millions have felt this, and exclaimed—

" We want no more; let this suffice;
The cross, once seen, is death to every vice,
Those worldly charms which blinded us before,
All vanish there, and fascinate no more."

Not only is there this power of holiness, but there is also the power of hope. Even if men are prosperous in sin they despair when sin is detected and condemned. It was so in ancient days. Men loved their idolatry, and boasted that all things would continue as they were. But they were mistaken, and when at length they saw their guilt, they were afraid, and said—"There is no hope, I have loved strangers, and after them will I go. This is universal—it is the spirit of Satanic empire—in this world delusion and sin, and in the world to come despair and death. No wonder such a result takes place when conscience is aroused and stung with remorse—when the heart is smitten through with godly sorrow—when conscience does its duty—when the mind exerts its power—when all excuse is removed, and men see their sins in all their sinfulness, their hearts are broken, and they are apt to say, "There is no hope. Mercy is clean gone for ever." Such a result, however, would be universally disastrous; for in despair there would be no disposition to return. The mind despairing would go on and fill up the measure of its iniquity, and thus rush on to the goal! But the blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin. On the cross he paid the penalty, and thence the hope of forgiveness issued far and near to all the nations of the earth.

This word of hope is come unto you this night, Christ is lifted up that he may draw all men unto him—that while others attract the eye, he may attract the heart—while others stimulate and please the senses, he may stimulate and please all the faculties of the soul. "Look unto me and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth, for I am God, and there is none else;" is the language of him who bore our sins in his own body on the tree; and is there no one here to-night burdened by sin?—whose conscience warns him even while walking amid all the splendours of this great city, that God is angry with him?

" Art thou a wretch of hope forlorn,
The victim of consuming care?
Is thy distracted bosom torn
By fell despair?
Do foul misdeeds of former times
Wring with remorse thy guilty breast,
And ghosts of unforgiven crimes,
Murder thy rest?
I charge thee live, repent and pray,
Low in the dust thy sins deplore,
There yet is mercy. Go thy way
And sin no more."

Christ purchased this when he died and exclaimed—"Now is the judgment of this world. Now shall the Prince of this world be cast out."

In the last place, this result is secured by the overthrow of the opposing force to the spiritual domination to which I have referred. When Christ left his disciples, he said—"It is expedient for me to go away, for if I go not away the

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Comforter will not come." This work must be accomplished, and in the accomplishment of it the Saviour's purpose will be secured. We ask no more in our most fervent prayers, and we desire nothing better in our fondest expectations, than that the spiritual empire of evil should be overthrown, and that the dominion of God, and of the Holy Ghost, should be universal in the minds and hearts of men. This is what we seek when we say, "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven." There is a spiritual power present with the truth, and with those who love the truth, wherever the name of God is regarded, and wherever his word is proclaimed,—there is a glorious power, which is our hope—whereby the weak things of this world become mighty, and its foolish things wise, things which are not, become as things which are, in God's sight most glorious, in his hands most precious, and in their results most blissful. It is clear, therefore, that there are forces in the universe besides those material ones, with which our senses can commune. On the one side is arrayed all the crimes of earth, and the results of man's iniquity, and on the other our blessed Saviour, with his cleansing blood, and the power of the Eternal Spirit to penetrate, enlighten, renew, and sanctify the soul of man. This is the purchase of the Saviour's death—this is the blessing which, in answer to his intercession, was given to the church, that they who are in the prison house may hear the voice of the Son of God, and run forth to liberty, forsaking their clammy dungeon, shaking off their chains, and rejoicing in the freedom of Christ's people, conformed in this world to the Saviour's will, and in the world to come partakers of his glory.

"Then we shall see his face,
And never, never sin;
But from the rivers of his grace
Drink endless pleasures in."

And may God grant it for Christ's sake. Amen.

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The following Nos. of the Penny Pulpit contain Sermons delivered at Exeter Hall.

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- 1,701, The Gift of God, by the Hon. and Rev. B. W. Noel, M.A.
- 1,703, The Prodigal's Return, by the Rev. W. Brock.
- 1,706, The City of Refuge, by the Rev. J. Beaumont, M.D.
- 1,710, The Truth, by the Rev. J. Aldis.
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- 1,713, Looking to Christ, by the Rev. J. Hamilton, D.D.
- 1,714, Why will ye die? by the Rev. J. Stoughton.
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- 1,765, The Marriage Feast, by the Rev. W. B. Noel, M.A.

(To be continued.)

JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, AUGUST 10, 1851,

BY THE REV. JOHN STOUGHTON,

(Of Kensington.)

AT EXETER HALL.

"Being justified by faith we have peace with God."—Romans v. 1.

THERE might have been seen in the first quarter of the sixteenth century, vast multitudes gathering in the church of the old German town of Wittemberg, to listen to a monk, the manner and matter of whose preaching were alike extraordinary. The people sat or stood, with eyes rivetted on the speaker, and many a tear rolled down the cheek of peasant and burgess, matron and maiden, as the instructions, and appeals, of that remarkable man, expressed in racy words and phrases fell upon their ear with an eloquence which now flashed and rolled like the elements in a thunder storm, and then tenderly beamed out like the sun ray on the flower which the storm had broken; while he proclaimed and enforced on them truths, which he evidently felt to be of the highest moment. As a man realizing eternal things, with heaven and hell before him, and the eye of God upon him, and immortal souls around him, hastening to their account, he delivered his message. "The desire of self-justification," he would say, "is the source of all the pangs that are felt by man's heart; but he that receives Jesus Christ as a Saviour has peace. Faith in Christ takes from you all confidence in your own wisdom, in your own righteousness, in your own strength; it teaches you that if Christ had not died for you, and had not thus saved you, neither you nor any creature could have benefitted you. There remains nothing for you but Jesus, none but Jesus, Jesus alone, Jesus fully sufficing for your soul." The people thus addressed, had been accustomed to hear far different doctrine. Ritualism had formed the substance of their gospel, and ritualism had given no peace to the really conscience-stricken souls among them; now these tidings came upon such listeners like words from heaven, as they truly were. Heavy loads of conscious guilt and sorrow fell from many a heart, and a celestial tranquillity, as substantial as it was soothing beamed on it like "a morn serenely beautiful after a night of tempests and of horror." Not by rote, not from man, not by hard dry criticism, but by the deep devout study of his New Testament in the little monastery at Erfurt—the study of it with prayers and tears—the study of it with deep anxiety to know God's will, had the monk, Martin Luther, learned the truth he taught. And, when tarrying in the corrupt city of Rome, and when he still full of ignorance and superstition, wished to get an indulgence, and for that purpose was, according to the custom there, to crawl up on his hands and knees what was called Pilate's stair-case, (foolishly said to have been transported by miracle from Jerusalem to Rome,) when thus strangely employed, the heavenly truth, which before he had only dimly seen, like the sun glimmering through dense clouds, came out like the sun in a clear sky. "The just shall live by faith." He saw it, understood it, felt it as by inspiration and rushed from the scene of his superstitious folly, to seek justification at the foot of

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the cross. That was the decisive epoch in the spiritual history of that remarkable man.

About the same time, on the banks of the beautiful lake of Zurich, in the grey old Norman-looking cathedral which rises over the city of that name, multitudes might also be seen crowding the aisles, to listen to the earnest preaching of Zuingle, who, without concert with Luther, had been taught, like Luther, the same faith, amidst the struggles and conflicts of his own soul, by that Divine Instructor, who speaks to man's inmost nature, "Christ," said he, "has acquired for us a redemption which will never end. It is the eternal God who has died for us, his sufferings then perpetually avail for salvation, they ever propitiate the divine justice, in favour of all who rest upon his sacrifice with a firm and immoveable faith." "Souls" says D'aubigné, "that longed for salvation in the city of Zurich, found repose on hearing this good news, but men's minds were beset with old errors, which it was necessary should be destroyed. Starting from the grand truth of there being a salvation which is the gift of God, Zuingle powerfully remonstrated against the pretended merit of human works—'Since eternal salvation,' he would say, 'proceeds wholly from the death of Jesus Christ, the merit of our works is mere folly, not to say rashness and impiety.'

A few years afterwards, vast numbers of our own forefathers might be noticed ranged round the old stone pulpit, in St. Paul's Churchyard, listening with deep attention to Latimer, or Ridley, or some other father of the English Reformation, descanting upon the same theme, turning away the thoughts of men from the vain devices in which they had put their trust to that solid foundation of hope which is found in the merits of our crucified Lord. In those sermons of Latimer, which have been handed down to us, and which afford such remarkable specimens of plain, earnest, homely preaching, preaching adapted to the times and to the people, the efficacy of faith is a very prominent and frequent subject. Abjuring the idea of salvation by sacraments and rites, by any office of the priest, any merit of our own, or any intercession of the saints, he directed men, at once, to Christ, teaching them that by faith in him, justification and life would be secured for ever.

It was the doctrine of justification by faith alone, which formed the great peculiarity in the views, and the instructions of those good men. The doctrine itself was held by distinguished divines before, but rendered inconsistent, if not neutralized by the dogmas and usages associated with it. "The gospel," observes one of them, "is no other than the blessed tidings that the only begotten Son of God, clad in our flesh, had made satisfaction for us to the justice of the eternal Father. He who believes this enters into the kingdom of God, he enjoys the universal pardon, from a carnal he becomes a spiritual creature, from a child of wrath a child of grace, he lives in a sweet peace of conscience." This was evangelical language, but logically it was inconsistent with other tenets which the parties held; we would hope that some, with a blessed inconsistency, did, by faith, in the one Saviour, enter into peace and joy. We would hope that in the darkest hours of the church's history, there were always some, who discerned glimmering as a star at least, the sweet, and elevated doctrine specified. But to teach justification by faith, while tenets of an opposite order accompanied it, could never prove effective in the guidance of poor troubled souls into the heaven of hope and rest which Divine love has opened. It was clearing away the doctrine from all entanglements; it was separating it from a huge system of error; it was the exhibition of it, not as a mere scholastic proposition, but as a real living truth, as that which God had dropped down from his own throne, as a chain to draw the sinner up to heaven; it was the preaching of justification as the full and complete acceptance of the believer with God, of faith as the only instrument of obtaining it, and of Christ's work as the only meritorious ground on which it is conferred;—it was this that made the reformer's doctrine mighty through God, to the pulling down of strong holds.

To understand the value, and force of "justification by faith," it must not be looked upon, merely as a question between theologians, as a point of debate in schools of divinity, as a thesis contended for by one scholastic reasoner, and

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fought against by another scholastic reasoner, but as a grand experimental and practical truth, meeting the deepest and most distressing wants of our fallen nature." Think of a man at the time of the Reformation, troubled in spirit with that question of questions—"How shall I a fallen and guilty being regain the favour of God?" So penetrated with it as to find no rest without its solution. The church in which he has been brought up, answers the question by telling him, that fasts, and penances, and mortifications, that pilgrimages and indulgences, that prayers of the saints, that his own good works, above all his purity and benevolence, will procure for him what he seeks. The poor man, perhaps, becomes a monk, and by zealous attention to the rules of his order, by constant self-denial and prayer, labours to get rid of the burden of his guilt. In the chapel of his monastery, before the image of Mary, in the silence and solitude of night, he weeps and wrestles with the holy mother of God, as he has been taught to call her, asking her, begging her to intercede with her Son in his behalf; or the man, not having a call to a monastic life, goes on a pilgrimage to some distant shrine, to St. Thomas of Canterbury, to St. James Compostella, to Rome, or to Jerusalem, or he adopts some other of the manifold methods of relief inculcated by the priesthood, and that he does, we suppose, not in the spirit too common in those days, but in a deep, thoughtful, earnest spirit. He is seeking peace by the lights which the church has kindled, and he is like a man in some gloomy cavern, groping his way by glimmering tapers, striving to get out of the darkness into the illumination and fresh air of day. The doctrine of justification by faith propounded to such a man, is seen at once to be no schoolastic refinement, no dry dead dogma, but a living, precious, peace-inspiring truth.—My poor brother, thou art mournfully deceived; Christ's gospel teaches thee to come at once to him, to look to his cross, to his infinite merit, to his sole meditation; not by way of some distant shrine, not through the gloomy cloister, not along the pathway of the saint's intercession, but directly, by an immediate act of simple faith come thou to Christ. Believe in him who justifieth the ungodly, and being justified by faith thou shalt have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.—The man believing that, gets into a new region of thought, finds himself in another spiritual element from that he had dwelt in before. He is out of the cave now, delivered from its darkness and bondage, and finds himself overarched by the serene sky, and fanned by the breath of heaven. The sunshine of God's love now fills him with cheerfulness and joy, "Being justified by faith he has peace with God."

And, my brethren, in like manner now, the doctrine of justification by faith, when it opens upon the heart and conscience of the convinced sinner, is felt to be a precious remedy for its grief. If within these walls, some soul awakened from the slumber of spiritual death, comes asking, "What must I do to be saved?" comes hoping that God will send a message through his servant, the announcement that God is the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus; that God takes the sinner's justification into his own hands; that he himself graciously effects it; that he imputeth righteousness without works; that to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness; that announcement comes with all the force of adaptation; it is like bread to the hungry, water to the thirsty, rest to the weary and foot-sore. Justification by faith as a way of salvation, as a broad and luminous fact, apart from all metaphysical niceties, we would now attempt to exhibit.

1. *Justification is the full acceptance of the sinner with God, so that his guilt is totally obliterated, and the Divine favour unreservedly vouchsafed.* We have explicit statements in the word of God to this effect. Plainly does the Apostle Paul declare that "there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." The pardon which it includes is complete and full, according to the Divine declaration by the prophet—"I, even I am he, that blotteth out thy transgressions as a cloud, and thine iniquities as a thick cloud, and will no more remember thy sins." A declaration which assures us that not a part of the penalty is remitted, but the whole; that the debt is not reduced, but cancelled; that the cloud is not diminished, but dispersed. And if the

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Divine Being thus pledges himself to throw into oblivion his people's guilt—if he will never repeal the act of amnesty, who else ever can?—“Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?” says Paul—“Is it not God that justifieth?” Can God himself, the supreme Judge of the universe, the fountain of all power legislative, and authoritative, from whose decisions there lie no appeal? Is it not even he who justifieth? What accuser then dare to lift up his voice? Who is he that condemneth? Our text is not merely to the same effect, not merely assuring us that the justified have peace with God, but it further develops the blessing as embracing the enjoyment of God's settled favour, and a title to the inheritance of celestial bliss. It is “a well of water springing up unto everlasting life.”—“We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom also we have access by faith, into this grace, wherein we stand and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.” These passages obviously indicate the idea, that justification is the full acceptance of the sinner with God, so that his guilt is totally obliterated, and the Divine favour unreservedly vouchsafed. Metaphorical language has often been employed to set forth this transcendent act, forensic allusions, in particular, have been introduced to illustrate its nature,—but no reference to the usages of ancient or modern tribunals,—no forms of acquittal in the Roman forum, or the English court, can supply even a faint shadow of this Divine transaction.

2. *It is the acceptance of the sinner with God through Christ*—“Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.”—“As by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation, even so by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men to justification of life.”—“He who knew no sin, was made sin for us, that we through him might be made the righteousness of God. Being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.” Passages might be multiplied, in which Christ is plainly represented as the procuring cause of salvation. The sacred writers lead us to reflect on the triple manifestation of his transcendent merit—his incarnation, “he took on him the form of a servant”—“his immaculate life, “he was holy, harmless, and undefiled, and separate from sinners”—his voluntary suffering, “he became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.” And in that wonderful three-fold display of condescension, holiness, and love, they place before us the grounds of the sinner's deliverance. In this respect, they exhibit him as the sacrificial victim Lamb, the Great High Priest, the Surety, Mediator and Intercessor. And that gracious sphere, as man's Saviour, Christ occupies alone. No other name, we are taught, is to be coupled with his, no other acts are to be associated with his, no other sacrifice is to be blended with his. “Neither is there salvation in any other”—“Other foundations can no man lay.” So clear and explicit are the terms which exclude all co-partnership with him in his redeeming office. He stands forth here in solitary grandeur, the world's one Saviour—the world's one hope. Not several cities of refuge have we here, but one: not numerous arks of safety, but one: not divers rocks on which to build, but one. The light of salvation revealed in the gospel flows not from a variety of sources, like the dim, pale, diffused radiance, emitted from a thousand stars, but it emanates from One single fount, like the deep ocean of glory, poured over the world out of the golden sun.

3. *It is Divine favour secured by faith.* This is represented as the personal act by which the grace of justification is obtained by us as individuals. This is the movement of the soul, like the grasp of a hand in agony, by which we lay hold on the altar of mercy. The blessing before us is ever described as a gift, a free gift. It is not to be purchased, like an inheritance—not to be won like a prize; but to be begged as a boon. Therefore, the idea of justification by works, is excluded. No kind of works can be the condition of obtaining the bestowment. The apostle's decision as to this principle is definite and final—“If by grace, then it is no more of works, otherwise grace is no more grace; but if it be of works, then it is no more grace, otherwise works is no more work.” The ideas are incompatible, contradictory, mutually distinctive, and therefore they cannot coalesce. If justification be by grace which Paul teaches us it is, as much as election, then it follows that it cannot

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be by works. A justification earned or bought, would be by works; but a justification, which is a free gift, must come to us by another method of appropriation. "Therefore," says our apostle, "it is of faith that it might be by grace." Justification by faith being in exact harmony with a dispensation of grace: justification by works, being utterly out of harmony with a dispensation of grace. Therefore, works are excluded; excluded even as the instrument in this wonderful process.

Again, the same conclusion Paul before deduces from other premises. He shews that men have violated the law of God—"That Jews and Gentiles are all under sin, that there is none that doeth righteous, no, not one." Innocent men are justified by legal works, but guilty men cannot. So plain is this that it amounts to a truism—"By deeds of law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin. We conclude then that a man is justified by faith without the works of the law." Thus, from two distinct premises, Paul brings out the same conclusion. By two roads he arrives at the same terminus. Not in equivocal words, in expressions, admitting of a double meaning, does he announce the great gospel principle, but plainly, so as to preclude, one would think, all further controversy—"A man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ." The negative form of language throughout, is remarkable. As, when our Lord says—"My kingdom is not of this world," he says, more than he would have done if he had simply affirmed—that it is spiritual, for if he said only the latter, it might be alleged that his kingdom has also a secular aspect or element: but the negative form of speech shuts out that idea. So, when Paul says, "we are justified without the works of the law," he says more than he would have done if he had simply affirmed—that we are justified by faith. For if he said only the latter, it might have been urged—"Yet we are justified by works too?" but here, also, the negative form of speech shuts out that idea. I do not see how the doctrine which Paul intends to teach can be mistaken.

4. *The doctrine is in accordance with the rest of revelation.* Here we shall be reminded of what James says—"Ye see how by works a man is justified, and not by faith only." Some appeal to James, and repudiate the principle which appears to us to be so luminously set forth by Paul. Men of science, when they have examined a certain class of phenomena, and clearly discovered a natural law, do not set them all aside, when they come at a fact, which looks at first sight as if it pointed another way. They seek some method of harmonizing the difference. There is a very simple method of harmonizing James with Paul. Divine truth has more sides than one. It is a beautiful prism shining with varied hues, according to the light in which it is viewed. Paul looked at one side—James at another. Paul, in that portion of the epistle to the Romans, from which we have made our quotation, fixed his eye on the doctrinal principles of Christianity—James, in the passage referred to, develops its practical relations. Paul traces the Christian life to its source, in the work of Christ and the grace of God—James maps out the windings of the stream, through the channel of duty. Paul evidently treats of the justification of our persons before God—James of the justification of our Christian profession before men—"Faith, if it hath not works," he says, "is dead being alone." "Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith and I have works, shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works." "Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works and by works was faith made perfect?" The proof of the reality of faith is evidently his subject. How man may prove to his fellow man that he hath faith; not how a sinner may secure the favour of God. Abraham had long before obtained that, by faith alone, as we learn from Paul, James overlooks not the fact, but plainly says, "Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness, and he was called the friend of God." Being reconciled at the early period, when called out of Ur of the Chaldees, being justified then before his gracious Maker, years afterwards, when called to offer up his son, he shewed the strength of his faith, and the sincerity of his profession, and justified his character before the world and to all ages, as a faithful ser-

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vant of the Lord Most High." "Ye see then how that by works a man is justified and not by faith only."

5. It clears away the confusion which in some quarters has gathered over the subject. Justification is sometimes confounded with inherent righteousness with the gracious qualities, the holy elements infused into the soul by regeneration, and, accordingly, justification is spoken of as something capable of increase. It is as if in the case of some plague-stricken criminal forgiven and released from the consequences of his crime, and at the same moment placed under some physician for his recovery; his forgiveness should be confounded with his cure, and as the man got well, it should be said he was more and more pardoned. Again, though it is admitted that by the letter of the law of Moses, men could not be justified; yet, in direct opposition to Paul it is held that by works of true righteousness men may be justified. Faith is admitted to be necessary, but it is insisted on as the concomitant of works. "Men are justified by works, yet not without faith." But so far from faith standing out in this relation alone; it is placed in a position subordinate to its companions. Baptism is represented as the primary instrument of justification; a justification extending only to original sin, and acts done before baptism. The belief of the gospel is spoken of as essential to this sacrament; yet faith, as well as hope and charity, were stated to be its fruits. Confused and contradictory notions of such kinds have long existed; elements of precious truth mixed up with errors, lead to inextricable confusion, for while errors contradict each other, truth contradicts them all; and when they are thrown together, however skilful may be the hand that endeavours to bind them in harmony, a symmetrical arrangement is impossible. The doctrine of justification by faith alone, deduced from the teaching of Paul, clears away the confusion and removes these errors. It is as if some garden, that had in its springs of living water, had become overgrown with weeds and brushwood, so as to hide the springs and to cover the streams with water weeds. The springs, however, have continued to bubble up in their concealment, and to refresh now and then, a thirsty wayfarer, who sought them out, and put aside the entanglements that fenced them in. In teaching justification by faith alone, we are like labourers, engaged in clearing up, and clearing out those springs—cutting down the overshadowing thickets, and removing the filth and pollution, and opening a clean channel through which the united waters may run, and increasing their fulness and purity, by bringing down from the neighbouring hills an additional supply, yielded from the beautiful fountains which God's hand had cut out among the rocks. How does the doctrine of justification by faith alone, like a broad stream make glad the city of God. How welcome to many a thirsty one is the cry, "Ho every one that thirsteth come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea come, buy wine and milk without money, and without price." With joy, did the people, who heard the preachers at St. Paul's cross, with joy did the groups that gathered to hear the Bible reading in the aisles of the old cathedral, with joy did they, and many more, bring their empty hearts and draw water out of the wells of salvation. And so it is unto this day.

We are told that the soul that would find peace, must go and pour the tale of its sins into the ear of a mortal priest: not simply confess a fault committed against another man to that man, which is a duty, but in secret he must acknowledge every private offence to a fellow sinner as if he were God. Then, according to that man's direction, the burdened soul must seek to get rid of its load by some sort of penance. And then, from that same poor, feeble, absolution, the act of pardon, the regal act of Christ, and God, is to be sought. Oh, how completely, and at once the soul that believes the doctrine of the text is delivered from the confessional with all its accompaniments! He has no need to go to a human priest, for he is already pardoned through the mediation of the divine priest. He has no need of penance, for the penalty of his offences has been borne by the Lamb of God, whose blood cleanses from all sin. He has no need of absolution from the church, for he has received his absolution from the church's Lord, that absolution which remits all punishment for ever. "Being justified by faith he has peace with

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God." It delivers from dependence on the intercession of saints. Images of the saints are, in the continental churches, as numerous as images of Christ; and never shall I forget the passionate kiss which I once saw a female imprint upon the foot of a marble statue of the Virgin, in a French cathedral. The woman's soul seemed going forth with that kiss, as if Mary had been her Saviour. Methinks I hear her speaking to such a poor woman; methinks I hear her in the dim shadows, and silence of the cloister, addressing the crowds, telling them, "I have no power to save; I, though now a saint in glory, was once a sinner, and came here through the mediation of my only Son and Lord; I am but one of the multitude who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. The hope and stay of my spirit on earth was this precious truth, 'being justified by faith we have peace with God,' and you by faith have as direct an access to Christ as I." Believing the doctrine of justification by faith, it seems to us as if that holy, blessed, and honoured woman were ready to descend from heaven to rebuke her misguided worshippers. If she and the saints know what is going on, on earth, could anything inspire grief in glorified spirits, the reliance on their intercession must make them sad. Belief in the blessed doctrine of our text puts an end to all this. We need not their aid in seeking pardon when we are already justified through their Lord and ours. If God's pardon be complete in itself, if there be no other name given among men, whereby we can be saved, than Christ's precious name; if we are justified by faith without works, then the vast fabric of superstition is shaken from its basis, struck by lightning from heaven, and falls down in hopeless and everlasting ruin. And this blessed truth clearly understood, removes every kind of confusion that can cloud the mind of the religious inquirer. To the question, "What must I do to be saved?" manifold answers may be returned, and prayer and penitence and religious services and alms deeds may be proposed as methods of safety and sources of peace, while experiment proves their insufficiency. Hither and thither the soul is tossed about on a sea of uncertainty and dissatisfaction till it catches a clear view of the heaven-sent message: "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life." That settles the grand question. That makes the way of salvation plain, direct, and easy. That clears up the subject, and comes upon the soul with a gracious power which betokens its origin. It is light in the understanding, sunshine in the heart, and whence can it come but from heaven?

6. *The doctrine is conducive to holiness.* We shall be told that it is destructive of holiness. It may seem so to some with their creed: not to us with ours. We believe not that the faith of justification is an inactive principle; we hold it to be a living faith, and we agree with James, that a living faith will shew its life by holy fruits. We agree with old Latimer, who says, "Faith is a noble duchess, she hath ever her gentleman usher going before her—the confessing of sins; she hath a train after her—the fruits of good works, the walking in the commandments of God." We believe with Paul, that "faith worketh by love," and ever kindleth love, and keeps it alive. Oh, my friend and brother, dost thou really think that this belief tends to licentiousness? Thou knowest not our faith, and feeling. We sympathize with the blessed Apostle Paul, who proves in his wonderful epistle to the Romans, that gospel faith sanctifies as well as justifies—"Shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace. God forbid." Little must thou know the state of a soul justified by faith. Men may talk of justification by faith, and live in sin; men may forget it, and live in sin, but no one who feels it, can do so, and do it while he feels it. Not while we see ourselves at the foot of the cross, not while we catch the anointing of grace, as it drops from heaven—not then can we sin. Alas! alas! we do sin, but it is not because we believe in justification by faith; but because that truth sometimes becomes to us, as if it were unreal, a mere form of words, or we forget it. The want of faith is what leaves us open to sin—while that truth sheds its fresh and balmy unction over our souls, we cannot sin. Can we, liberated slaves, stoop down to gather from the dust our shattered manacles and fetters, and wish to bind them again upon our limbs? Can we, while rejoicing in

the liberty of the children of God, desire to go back to our former dungeon? Can we, brought home to our heavenly Father, cast a longing eye on the land of our exile? Can we, while leaning wholly on Immanuel's arm, as he points to the gate of heaven, for a moment think of turning back, and taking the road to hell?

Anxiously have we endeavoured, throughout our discourse, to exhibit justification by faith not as a theological dogma merely—not as a hard dry proposition, moulded in the laboratory of scholastic divines, but as a living, life-giving truth, in the hearts of fallen men. A nominal assent to the doctrine before us will be valueless in reference to your salvation. In the respect, it matters little with what school of theology you agree. Assent to a creed, acquiescence in a formula will never save you. Such assent, such acquiescence is of all dead things, the most thoroughly dead. Only a vital union with the living and exalted Redeemer, will deliver you from condemnation now, and hell hereafter; and only a living faith will effect that union. We can conceive of the question before us, as being debated in the schools, and of my hearers ranging themselves on one side or other of the controversy. We can conceive of Luther or Ridley, contending manfully for the Pauline doctrine, throwing into the conflict all their logical acuteness, dialectic skill, and theological learning. We can conceive of Roman divines, earnestly doing battle on the opposite side, and of the clashing of arguments, and the dust and heat of polemic strife—and we can conceive of conscious victory and conscious defeat, or the former proudly claimed on both sides, as the result—and we can imagine this congregation, become the spectators of the warfare, and entering by strong sympathy into the struggle, and ranging themselves, some with one party, and some with the other, and raising the shout of applause and the song of triumph, as either division is thought to gain the mastery. But, oh, brethren, such antagonism merely, and such interest merely, would be poor work and vain feeling. Ah, it matters but little, in relation to your own immortal interests, with whom you go in this matter, if you have not the faith which really justifies, and also renews. Shew me rather the poor man, whose heart is broken with guilt,—who sinks in the dust as a sinner before his God; and, Luther like, opens, and studies, and prays over his Bible, and asks of the Spirit to teach him, and learns from the New Testament, not perhaps so as to express it correctly in the form of a proposition, but so as to feel it, as a word from Christ, in his innocent soul, "that being justified by faith we have peace with God." It is infinitely better that you should be like him, than that you should be able, with the dexterity of an accomplished schoolman, to state, and vindicate the abstract truth. I would give the learning and logic of the best divine, without true faith, for the true faith of the poor peasant girl, without any logic or learning. I would rather be like the woman, who said—"If I may but touch the hem of his garment, I shall be made whole"—than be one of the masters of Israel, destitute of her simple and beautiful reliance on the Son of God. I would rather be a man who is groping after Christ, amidst the gloom of superstition, and the entanglements of ceremonialism, than be the man who, boasting of light and liberty, has the eye of the soul fixed on self instead of the Saviour, on the world instead of the cross. Look then, dearly beloved, to the truth exhibited as a spiritual and blessed reality. By faith, accept justification; by faith, be reconciled to God; by faith, secure an interest in Christ. Have you been looking to ceremonies and works, as the means of your salvation, and found as the result that they are things that cannot give you peace? Abandon the vain attempt of seeking heaven in that direction. Follow the teaching of the Spirit of God in the New Testament, and that will lead you out of devious ways and trackless paths, up to heaven itself, along the road trodden by true saints, ever since it was said—"He that hath the Son hath life. Voyager to eternity, has thy bark been tossed by storms of uncertainty and doubt, and unbelief? Hast thou been driven hither and thither, by the whirling winds and the conflicting currents of thine own fears and other men's opinions? Now, then, make for that point to which my text serves as a guiding light—make for that state of acceptance with God, which is obtained by faith, and thou shalt find thy weather-beaten vessel at last reposing in the harbour of Divine peace, under the shadow of the heavenly city, where there are calm waters and a sure anchorage!

THE HEAVENLY CANAAN.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY EVENING, AUGUST 10, 1851,
BY THE REV. T. W. AVELING,
(Of Kingsland.)
AT EXETER HALL.

"We are journeying unto the place of which the Lord said, I will give it you: come thou with us, and we will do thee good: for the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel."—Numbers x. 29.

WHILE the children of Israel were in the desert Moses was visited by Hobab, the son of Raguel the Midianite, Moses' father-in-law; and during the time of his sojourn with the host of Israel, the signal was given for their departure to another spot, by the moving of the pillar of cloud, that shadowy symbol of the divine presence, which had accompanied them from Egypt, and which was to be their guide amidst the intricacies of the vast howling wilderness, through which they had to pass. Hobab, in the words of the text, was invited by his illustrious kinsman to accompany them; to abandon the dreary and inhospitable scenes that rose around the tents of his people, and to share in the possession of that "better country," which God had promised unto the ancestors of Israel. "We are journeying," said Moses, "unto the place of which the Lord hath said," to our fathers in a former time, "I will give it you," the fair and goodly territory of Canaan; a "land flowing with milk and honey;" a scene of luxuriance and fertility, clad with perpetual verdure and glowing with beauty, like the garden of the Lord—come, exchange this wilderness for that pleasant land, and identify yourselves with us, the people to whom the promises have been given. It shall be for your advantage, temporally and spiritually, for the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel, in which good, if you are willing to associate with us, you shall be welcome to participate.

It appears, that at first Hobab refused this invitation, although there is reason to believe from a subsequent statement, (Judges i. 16,) that he yielded to the request of his kinsman, forsook the land of his fathers, and went forth towards Canaan, a portion in which his descendants ultimately possessed. Now these words may be regarded as the invitation which the church of the living God gives unto all those who are yet without its pale, but who are found, from time to time, hovering round the skirts thereof, and sometimes identified with it in works of beneficence and mercy; yet still not one with the people of God in seeking that heaven towards which they are diligently wending their way. Will you, to-night, listen to me as a messenger from them unto those of you, old or young, rich or poor, who are not at this moment in the way that leads to the celestial Canaan; nay, have never even thought of setting out in that path which will bring you thither? There is a moral certainty that in the midst of this vast promiscuous assemblage there are scores, perhaps hundreds, who are without a well-grounded hope of heaven, because they are without God and without Christ in the world; who, if the finger of God were to stay the current of life, at this moment, would pass away from a world of sorrow, to one of deeper and more deadly woe. Now, dear brethren, it is the wish of the church of Christ, that not one soul should thus leave time for eternity. It is the yearning desire of all them who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity and in truth, that their fellow-men should be brought to see that they are suffering a terrible loss whose hearts have never welcomed a Saviour; that they are yet ignorant of what constitutes true felicity, whose bosoms have never glowed with love to him. Hence it is that the ministers, and friends of Christ address their brethren in a common humanity, and say to them, with impassioned earnestness, "We yearn over your souls, because we know they cannot be happy; we see that you are going wrong, and we would, as God shall help us, endeavour to lead you right; we are journeying to the place of which the Lord hath said, I will give it you: come with us, Come! young man while your soul yet glows with youthful aspirations:—Come! thou grey-headed patriarch, weary with the burden of many years;—come with us and we will do thee good. Such blessed results shall follow your reception of the Saviour, and your identification with his cause, as you have never even in your most sanguine moments ventured to anticipate.

Let me claim your prayerful attention while I point out—

I. THE GREAT OBJECT WHICH IS SOUGHT BY THE CHURCH OF GOD.
We are seeking heaven, and its perfect felicity we hope ultimately to realize.

Now you will observe that my text speaks of a journey which had to be pursued before Canaan was reached; and the similitude holds good, when we speak of the Christian's course. Life is very often thus represented, and the representation is appropriate and beautiful. It is a journey of different lengths to different people. Some very soon end their course; others have a longer period allotted to them; but whether the course be lengthened or brief, one event happens alike to all:—rich or poor, old or young—all die. At that goal where the souls of men go forth from the world of time into the world of eternity, there are two roads branch off—one leads upward to the realms of light and felicity, and the other downward to the regions of darkness and woe. The direction which the spirit will take when it comes to that dread spot where these roads diverge, depends altogether upon the direction that it was taking before it came thither. He that is "unjust," when he reaches that gate, "will be unjust still, and he that is holy will be holy still." The man whose face has been Zion-ward before, shall ascend to the city of God, while the man whose feet have trodden the paths of the destroyer, if he is walking therein, when death confronts him and ends his earthly career, will go on downward to the depths of an eternal hell. O, brethren, there is something unutterably solemn in the reflection—and I confess, that to my own heart, the thought is most affecting as utterance is given to it in the midst of thousands of one's fellow creatures—I say there is something inexpressibly solemn in the reflection, that at this moment every one of you here, is either in the road that leads to heaven, or in the road that leads to hell. It must be so. There is no middle path. There are but two parties here to-night; they who are the friends of God, and they who are not. There are but two conditions of spiritual existence, in which you are all found; you are saved or unsaved; and, I repeat it, are each of you *now* in the path of destruction, or that which leads to eternal life. Now, my brethren, if this is true,—and you cannot gainsay it; if the Bible be believed,—then you will not be surprised that Christian ministers and people are anxious on your behalf, and seek to persuade you to come and walk with them on the road which they are pursuing.

It may perhaps be said by some—"But are you quite sure that the land toward which you profess to be journeying, will really become your possession? How know you that there may not be some mistake?" We reply that we have the same solemn assurance that heaven shall be the irreversible inheritance of the true Israel of God, as the descendants of Jacob had, that the earthly Canaan should be the possession of his children. Moses said to Hobab—"We are journeying to the place of which the Lord hath said, 'I will give it you.'" His confidence rested upon God's promise; and our confidence, brethren, rests upon the same foundation—"The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." God has told us that there is "an inheritance, which is incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away," reserved for all that love him. Our Divine Master himself has told us, that he is gone to prepare a place for us; and that that place, thus prepared, shall be the eternal home of his own people. We have no doubt about the matter. We are as confident that heaven will be the final abode of the church of God, as we are of the existence of any object that meets the senses. Nay! we are more sure, because, in the former case we have the infallible word of God to trust; while in the latter, we may be deceived as to what is passing around us; our senses may mislead us; but when the Lord hath spoken, there is no room for doubt. The known character of God is a most sure guarantee for the truth of his words.

Now with respect to the place towards which we are journeying, its appearance, its engagements, its characteristic felicities, little is known. Our ideas of heaven are made up of the images of things that exist upon earth. We do not know so much of what heaven is, as of what heaven is not. You will find, in reading the Scriptures, that the sacred writers use negative descriptions rather than positive, when referring to heaven and the blessedness of the heavenly world. It is said that there is no night there, no sorrow, no pain, no death. But what there is to gladden and bless, eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive,

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except dimly and darkly. We are necessitated therefore to wait for a while, before we know "of a surety," in what the felicity of heaven consists. That it is a place of unspeakable blessedness we are quite sure, for God is there; and "in his presence there is fulness of joy; at his right hand there are pleasures evermore." Every thing that can conduce to the happiness of an intellectual and moral creature will be provided in heaven, for all those who have loved Christ upon earth; everything that can minister to the eternal felicity of the perfected spirits will be found awaiting it.

It has been said, with a good deal of truth, that we not unnaturally picture heaven as a place where will be found the counterpart and perfection of that which we most admire and love, and the opposite of that which we most dread and hate, upon earth. If, it has been said, the question had been asked of Lord Bacon, what his conception of heaven was, he would have replied, "A place where the immortal mind is enabled ever to soar upward; where its powers will be perpetually strengthened and expanded; where it will scale the loftiest heights of knowledge, penetrate to the depths of the greatest truths, and be enabled fully to comprehend that, of which on earth it had only the faintest conception." While if Wilberforce had been asked his idea of heaven, that loving gentle spirit would have answered, "A place where every heart beats with intense love towards all others, where there is an ardent and sincere affection thrilling, like an electric current through all souls; where envy and strife are for ever unknown, where the moral scene is one of unclouded beauty and all the air is love." If, however, the question had been asked of Robert Hall, he would have replied, with a painful remembrance of the acute agony which he was called for months and years to endure—"A place where there will be rest, calm and unbroken; rest for the body, and rest for the soul."

Well, brethren, heaven will be all these together—a place where the soul will advance in an intellectual progress for ever; a place where love will universally reign; and where there will be rest, perfect and perpetual rest from toil, and care, and sin, and sorrow." Yes,

"In heav'n there's rest! that thought hath a power
To scatter the shades of life's dreariest hour;
Like the sunbeam it dawns on a stormy sky,
Like the first glimpse of home to a traveller's eye;
'Tis the balm of the heart, of sorrow the cure,
The hope that deceives not, the promise that's sure.

"How sweet to the weary, 'in heaven there's rest,'
The tears are all dried from the eyes of the blest;
And the smiles that succeed are so dazzling and bright,
That none but a spirit could dwell in their light.
O! not like the smiles that here glow on the cheek,
But to hide the deep anguish no language may speak.

"In heaven there's rest; oh! how deep that repose!
Life's bitterness past with its follies and woes;
Its passions all hushed like the waves of the deep,
When tempests expire, and winds are asleep;
And only soft airs and sweet odours arise,
Like incense of evening that soars to the skies.

"Those sounds breathe sweet music, 'in heaven there's rest,'
I long to escape to the land of the blest;
Inspired by the prospect, thro' life's busy day,
To act and to suffer, to watch and to pray;
Then gladly exchange, when the summons is given,
The tumults of earth for the calmness of heaven."

Thrice, blessed truth, "There remaineth a rest for the people of God."

This, brethren, is the heaven towards which we are journeying, and which we urge you to seek along with us. But exertion is required, strenuous and persevering to attain the object sought. We wish not to deceive any of you. We do not ask you to identify yourselves with God's cause and people, under the vain and fallacious impression that your path will be all easy and smooth, that there will be no trouble or difficulty; that you have nothing to do but to begin the course, and that heaven will be realized without scarcely an effort or a thought. The word of God does not teach this, and his ministers dare not hold out such false lures. We leave it to Satan thus to delude them who foolishly serve him. Christ has said to every one who would be his disciple—"Let him take up his cross and follow me." You must make up your mind to battle every step of the journey. The very word last uttered suggests the idea of fatigue, and it may be fatigue great and lengthened. But, nevertheless, there is every encouragement given to set out, in order to

obtain the goodly land of promise. God has engaged to "supply all your need, according to his riches in glory, by Christ Jesus"—and will himself guide you and cheer you on your way. You will be favoured with many happy glimpses of your future abode, which will stimulate you to pursue your course with unremitting ardour. As a weary traveller, climbing some steep ascent, on the summit of which the loved ones of his heart are waiting to greet and welcome him, is nerved for his toil by occasional glimpses of his home, and its expectant inhabitants, so the Christian is cheered in his toilsome journey by a distant view of his Father's house above. The land afar off lies stretched out before him in glorious beauty and regal magnificence. Ofttimes, in the hour of pensive and holy thought, the domes and towers of the celestial city flash on his sight, gleaming in the splendour of the smile of God. Its jewelled foundations, its walls of jasper, and gates of pearl, and streets of gold are visible to the eye of faith, while the ear attuned to spiritual harmonies, seems to catch a faint echo of that divine music which floats from myriads of harps engaged in the service of the temple of God. Forms are there which he recognizes, and longs to embrace, and which he believes await his coming, to lead him to the throne of his adorable Master, who will open before him the treasures of his beneficence, and crown him with a diadem of unfading glory. What wonder, if often the spirit sighs—

"When shall the day, dear Lord, appear, And stand and bow amongst them there,
That I shall mount to dwell above, And view thy face, and sing thy love?"

Such prospects the child of God is from time to time permitted to enjoy, and he is thus enabled to endure, because he sees God and heaven, even though they are invisible.

II. Let us now consider THE INVITATION PRESENTED BY THE CHURCH OF GOD TO THEM THAT ARE WITHOUT. "Come with us and we will do thee good."

This is the invitation of the friends of God to those who are not his people. Now when Moses first employed this language, addressing his kinsman Hobab, he was actuated by the purest motives. You are not to suppose that the patriarch had the ambition of merely drawing one more follower to the standard of his people; he had a higher desire than this. His anxiety was that his kinsman—who was not unlikely ignorant of the true God, or at least, ignorant of the true character of God, should connect himself with the people, who had the ordinances of religion established and in use amongst them, and by association with whom his mind might become enlightened, and his heart affected, and a suitable preparation be made by him for a world beyond the grave.

Now do not let me be mistaken to-night—I do not think that it is very likely I shall,—when I say to you all, "Come with us." Do not, I beseech you, imagine, that I am influenced by any low desire of making proselytes. I should be ashamed to come to you and say,—Brethren, identify yourselves with our branch of the church of Christ; have nothing to do with any other party, but come with us—"The temple of the Lord are we." This would be the height of arrogance and bigotry. Blessed be God, true Christianity is not confined to any one sect. If I, therefore, as an Independent, came here to preach against those who hold different views from me on the subject of Baptism, and strove to turn them from their peculiar notions, I should waste their time and insult their judgments; and be unworthy of a hearing. But this is not my object to-night. When I say, therefore, "Come with us," I invite you to identify yourselves with the cause of Christ, and not that of any party, however excellent they may be. Our intense anxiety is to make men Christians in heart and life, rather than Churchmen or Dissenters, Baptists or Independents.

The invitation which the church gives you to-night, it gives to you as brethren. "Have we not all one Father? Hath not one God created us?" We know no distinction of nations, or tribes, or people. Wherever we meet with man we meet with an object of our sympathy, and to whomsoever we speak, our invitation is one and the same. But it is in the very nature of things to feel the most lively concern for those with whom we come most frequently in contact. Is it not natural that Englishmen should be more anxious for the conversion of their countrymen than for others? And is it not most of all natural that they should seek the conversion and well being of their own families and relation, before that of neighbours and strangers with whom they have little or nothing to do. Now, remember, it was a kinsman by whom Hobab was addressed; and it was because he was a true kinsman, who

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cherished a genuine love and pity within his heart, that he besought him to go with him to the promised land.

I am very likely speaking to many, to-night, who have friends and relations that love Christ, but who themselves are destitute of a similar affection towards him. There is a man whose wife is on the Lord's side, but he is not; there is a youth—perhaps another and another—who has come to this metropolis from some distant village or town; come from a praying circle to an ungodly one; whose principal hours are spent in the shop and the counting-house, where worldly affairs utterly extirpate religious thoughts; perhaps, too, he has become also connected with evil associates, and has imbibed principles and formed habits with the very name or existence of which he was not before acquainted. To all of you who have friends on the Lord's side, those friends, through my lips are now appealing, "Come with us, we who are seeking a lasting and happy home; identify yourselves with us, and with the cause of the Saviour, and be happy."

Say I not truly, young man, that often has this invitation been given by the trembling lips of the father who loved you, and the faltering tongue of the mother who bore you? Voices have appealed to you, whose tones will fall no more on your ear; though sometimes when busy memory leads you back to that silent chamber, where you knelt with a breaking heart to receive the last parental blessing, again there seems to float around you those low yet loving words, which fall on your spirit like the chimes of bells heard afar off at sea, and subduing your heart, make you feel as a very child. Perhaps you hear those voices now, calling on you to follow "those who through faith and patience inherit the promises."

Say I not right, O my brother! that the invitation has been given again and again to you, by the wife of your bosom, or by the child of your affections; but to neither of these has there been a joyful response? You have put away from you every request. Perhaps you have not mocked at the religion of your friends, but still you have shown that you have no kind of sympathy with it or with them. You may not have prevented those over whom you have control from worshipping God, according to the dictates of their own conscience, but you would never go with them to join in that worship. There may be some here who have never passed the threshold of the door of the sanctuary where their dearest friends are accustomed to pay their devotions to God. They may belong to a proscribed sect, and you will have nothing to do with them:—you do not like to be a marked character.

Perhaps some here may imagine that the preacher has been informed of them personally, and that the information he has obtained has led him to make these remarks. Brethren! we know you not; but this we do know, that human nature is much about the same, whether in country or town, and as this kind of character is far from being rare, we with no improbability conjecture there may be some such here to-night.

I come then, in the name of many loved ones, to you, and reiterate the invitation to each; "Come thou with us, and we will do thee good." O! that those who have hitherto spoken to you to no purpose may this night, through a stranger's lips, speak to you with powerful effect; and the great object be realized, on which their hearts have been for a long time set. O! that those who have been proof against the earnest appeals of friends may, this evening, bow down before God, and say, "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight. I have not lived as thy child; but from this hour thy people shall be my people, for Thou, their God, shall be my God. They are seeking heaven, and I will accompany them. Nothing shall stop my progress, if I may but enjoy thy help. Then will I sedulously pursue that path which leads to the Canaan of everlasting rest."

III. Let me show WHAT WILL BE THE ISSUE OF THE ACCEPTANCE OF THIS INVITATION?

Most cheering is the assurance that is given unto those who go with God's people of a positive blessing. "We will do thee good," said Moses, to Hobab, "for the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel." Now I am very anxious, dear friends, just to set before you this truth, that no person can be found who loves God, and who has accepted the invitation to associate with his people, without being a gainer thereby. The words of Solomon are as true now as when they were first uttered: "He that walketh with wise men shall be wise; but the companion of fools shall be destroyed." Association with them that

love God brings you into contact with some of the choicest spirits that can be found on the earth. Let not any young man suppose—although I know that the supposition exists, to no small extent—that all the intellectuality in the world is outside the church. Let no one imagine it to be an indication of mental poverty to be found allied with God's people. The devil has many ways of blinding the eyes of them that believe not; and I have no doubt, that one method adopted by him, in these days, when every young man desires to be thought intellectual, is to suggest the falsehood that to become a humble Christian is to compromise a man's character for mental superiority. But this idea is infinitely removed from the truth. We may not now, however, speak further on this point. What we merely ask is, that for your own sake, before you venture to give utterance to any opinion upon the matter, you will just make yourselves acquainted with a few facts that are to be met with in the literary and scientific world, and you will find that however much of intellectual power may exist elsewhere; however large the attainments in science of those who are not Christians, there is a vast amount of vigorous thought and scientific knowledge existing among those who are employed in the service of the Saviour. Some of the loftiest minds that ever existed have been found bowing down with the humility of little children at the foot of the cross. You will find—if you will only just take the trouble to look about you—that there are persons to be found amongst this class in all communions, whose example and instructions would stimulate you to make greater progress than you have ever made in all that is manly in thought and action; who would delight to assist you; who would point out to you the proper paths to pursue, and enable you to form an acquaintance with all that is grand and glorious in the several worlds of matter and of mind. By associating with them, also, you will be introduced to the highest of all studies, that of the Holy Scriptures, which teach man all he needs to know relative to himself, as a creature of time and eternity; and reveal to him the great God in the glory of his character and the inimitable beauty of his wondrous perfections. I know of nothing in the wide world of thought that can for a moment be compared in importance with these revelations of God to us. You may penetrate to the depths of the earth, and make geology speak to you in the words of olden times; you may soar into the infinite and converse with the stars, whose burning splendours have streamed through space for millions of years, you may extend your thoughts and inquiries to all objects in the illimitable universe, but you will find no revelations of God to equal those which are given you of his glory, wisdom, goodness, and greatness in this matchless book, especially in the latter portion thereof, where, in the light of the cross of Christ, you discover what elsewhere you cannot learn, God, in the person and wondrous achievements, of Christ, has “all his mightiest works outlined.”

But leaving this train of thought, let me next shew you, that by association with the people of God you will get good in other ways. You have to pass through this life in the discharge of certain duties, and your path may be a thorny one; at any rate it will not be one of flowers; you may find it difficult sometimes to maintain that strict integrity, which is of the highest importance, both to your present and future happiness. Associate yourselves then with those who will fortify you in your principles, and help you to maintain your good resolutions; who will encourage you in the path of rectitude, and will strengthen you, when you are about to faint or fall; who will give you that kind of advice, and set before you that species of example which will prove of infinite service to you, and so will help you to live honourably, and to die happy. Now such will certainly be found among the people of God. Come then with us.

How many have there been who commenced the voyage of life with the wind fair, and the vessel well trimmed, but who have foundered at sea, or become wrecked on some rock or shoal in their passage; whose painful history, were it but known to the world, would awaken the commiseration of all good men. In an evil hour, and unsuspectingly, a false friend was taken to their bosom, and their ruin followed. Have there not been some within the circle of your acquaintance who commenced life with the brightest prospects, and whose friends anticipated for them a future career of happiness and honour? but these hopes are blighted and their peace is destroyed. Is it needful for you to go far back in their history to ascertain the cause of this direful catastrophe? Was it not through the base fiend that they took to their bosom?—that Meph-

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stophiles with whom they associated, who led them from the right road, and drew them down into the very depths of sin; and who having brought them there, left them to perish in their own corruption, exulting like a demon, over the terrible results of his own wicked and infernal cruelty. Young man! let me say this to you, there is not one thing of more importance to your safety and happiness, than the choice of your companions; and hence it is that I want you to be found with God's people, that your choice may be amongst them, where there is the least possibility of being wrong. Depend upon it, if you take any other kind of people to your heart, your mind will become poisoned, and your soul made familiar with guilt, and that guilt will be the parent of years, it may be of an eternity, of bitter anguish. Do you with a bad companion, if it be your misfortune or sin to have one, as the sailors did with Jonah—they cast him into the sea that the storm might be allayed—so cast you overboard every ungodly associate, lest the wrath of God to the uttermost overtake you; and cleave you to the people of God, and with your whole heart seek the Lord.

I might go on pointing out to you, how, in various other ways association with the people of God will do you good, but time fails me. I can only advert, in passing, to the fact, that by being one with Christians, you come into a position in which the blessings that God confers upon his church will be shared in by you. Now without wishing to be thought tainted with fanaticism, I do not hesitate to assert it as my solemn conviction, that there are special blessings conferred by God upon his church, as a church. I have no doubt that those who profess to love Christ, but who do not avail themselves of associating with his people in church-fellowship, lose many an advantage which they would otherwise enjoy. It was a good thing for Hobab that he joined himself to the Jews, because daily he had bread provided for him, and daily did the life-given stream flow by his tent in the desert, and the hand of divine beneficence minister to his wants, in common with the rest of the people, and while the Almighty arm was ever stretched out to defend and preserve him. Thus did Hobab realize the truth of the words of Moses.

Now you are assured that by associating yourselves with the people of God you will obtain higher good and richer blessings than these. Bread sweeter far and more precious than the manna of Canaan is provided for the people of God—a spiritual food that satisfies the soul: the water that flowed from the rock refreshed the body; but that water of life which in gospel ordinances and relationship we enjoy, and which comes clear as crystal out of the throne of God and of the Lamb, refreshes and gladdens the soul of him who receives it. To those that follow the standard of Christ God has promised victory over every foe. He will keep them through life as the apple of his eye; sin shall be pardoned, and grace bestowed. All events shall be overruled for their good, and made to subserve their present happiness and future felicity. "The Lord God is a sun and shield; the Lord will give grace and glory; no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly." "Blessed is the man that trusteth in him."

Let me offer one or two remarks in conclusion. Some of you, while admitting the truth of what has been advanced, may be ready to say—"Is it not possible for us to be on the Lord's side, to serve him, and endeavour to glorify him, without identifying ourselves with any portion of his professing people?" Now ministers very frequently meet with persons who make use of language like this—when men want to justify themselves in neglecting to identify themselves with the Church of Christ. "Cannot we serve God," say they, "without making any ado about it; without proclaiming it to the world? Cannot we worship God at home, as well as in the house of prayer—alone, as well as in the society of others?" It would not be wrong to answer these questions with a decided negative, without any attempt to prove that there can never be the same advantage gained by those who would keep alone, as by those who associates with others in the service of God. But let me ask this question of those who would try to excuse themselves from performing a solemn duty. Have you served Satan without any one knowing it? Why do you hesitate to make a public avowal of being a Christian, when you never hesitated to make a profession of being a man of the world—a follower of the evil one? What is the adversary, the usurper, to be honoured and served by you better than even the Master himself, your lawful Sovereign? Surely, it is only necessary to have this question fairly put before you, for you to perceive at a

glance, that if you have served Satan in past times, it is the least you can do to resolve that, for the future, you will serve Christ, and not less earnestly; and openly identify yourselves with his cause.

I would repeat the sentiment, dear friends, that if you wish to go forward, with any degree of comfort, and safety, and peace, in the road to heaven, you must be found along with the people that are treading the same path. The traveller from Egypt to the Holy Land, will not set out on his journey across the desert alone, but waits until a caravan is formed. If he were to venture by himself, infested as the road is by the Bedouin Arabs, he would probably lose all his possessions, and perhaps life itself. But when a number travel in company, with the requisite guards, they are likely to be safe from the foes that hover around them. Now there is a striking analogy between these circumstances and the case of the Christian, who is going from the Egypt of this world to the Jerusalem beyond. There are pit falls and snares in his path, which may involve him in destruction; and an adversary, which, like a roaring lion, is going about, seeking whom he may devour. Those who are strangers to the road, need the guidance and guardianship of those who have travelled the path before, and know something of the perils of the way; and will derive a positive benefit from their experience, prayers and counsel. They will be taught by them how to overcome certain dangers and difficulties, and will, in many ways, realize the value of association with God's people, as they journey towards their eternal home.

I have spoken to-night of two roads, in one or the other of which we are all treading. It is a mournful fact, that one of these, that which leads to destruction, is frequented much more than the other.

"Broad is the road that leads to death, While wisdom shows a narrower path,
And thousands walk together there; With here and there a traveller."

How is this? Why is it, that so many are treading in the broad way, and so few in the narrow path? Why should not the number of the latter be increased, and with accessions from this vast assembly? Well, now come forward to-night, and say to the ministers and people of God, in response to their invitation—"We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you. We will enter upon the narrow path that leads to life. We will associate only with those who are seeking heaven, and who will cheer and help us in our progress thither."

Let me entreat you who see and feel that you have been walking in the ways of sin long enough, to seek some minister or Christian friend, whom you may know, some venerable patriarch, or mother in Israel, and pour out your hearts before them, that your minds may be enlightened with judicious counsel, and joy break in upon your trembling souls. But whether you go to a minister or Christian friend, or not, I beseech you speak to God in the solitude of your own chamber: kneel down before the Lord your Maker. If your heart be sad with the consciousness of sin and danger, remember as you lift up your eyes towards heaven, and behold the light of those trembling stars that falls to earth so softly around you, that he who calleth the number of the stars, and calleth them all by their names, is he who healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds, that he dwelleth with those who are of a humble and a broken spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones. Then confess your sins and forsake them, abandon the world and serve him; and from this night your soul will become a partaker of the richest consolation of his Divine grace.

I may be speaking to a child of pious parents, who has forsaken the guide of his youth, and left the path of righteousness and peace. You may have been so long a wanderer, that it seems to you utterly impossible for you to be ever restored and saved. Your foot may at this moment be on the very threshold of hell! And you may perhaps say, in despair—"there is no hope for me. I must submit to the remediless misery that awaits me in the fathomless depths of eternal woe." But for you, my brother, thus fallen, and nigh to perishing, there is hope. You may think that "this mercy of God is clean gone for ever," and that he has forgotten to be gracious—yet, it is not so. In accents of love and pity he calls, and bids you look up and live. Only go to him at once; and with the penitence of a guilty, but broken heart, confess that you have sinned against him, and he will have compassion upon you; for the sake of a Divine Redeemer, forgive, and save, and bless you for ever.

"For ne'er hath prodigal come round,
Subdued in heart and craving grace,
Whate'er his faults, who hath not found
Forgiveness in the Saviour's face.
At contrite hearts he will not scoff—

Whoever knocks, an entrance wins:
Then let us, at the cross, throw off
The burden of our sins:
And though their dye be black as night,
His blood can make—has made them white."

THE MARRIAGE FEAST.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, AUGUST 17, 1851,
BY THE HON. AND REV. B. W. NOEL, M.A.,

AT EXETER HALL.

"And Jesus answered and spake unto them again by parables, and said, The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son, and sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come. Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready; come unto the marriage. But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm and another to his merchandise; and the remnant took his servants, and entreated them spitefully, and slew them. But when the king heard thereof, he was wroth; and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city. Then saith he to his servants, The wedding is ready but they which were bidden were not worthy. Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage. So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good; and the wedding was furnished with guests. And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment; and he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless. Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. For many are called, but few are chosen."—Matt. xxii. 1—14.

THIS passage being stated to be a parable is meant to teach us, therefore, a number of spiritual truths of importance for us to know, through the medium of some common secular events. The meaning of the terms is sufficiently plain to any person who inspects the parable: by the King is obviously intended the eternal Jehovah. By the Son is intended our Lord and Saviour; the Bride of the Prince is the church of God; the marriage feast of which mention is made, are those blessings which will be communicated to the servants of God, the disciples of Christ, at his second advent, and when the marriage of the Lamb is come. The invitation, you observe, is as wide as all those who ever hear the gospel. By the wedding garment which is here spoken of is meant the righteousness of saints—the justification of our souls by the righteousness of Christ which is said to be "put upon" believers, and to clothe them, and is that holiness without which no man shall see the Lord. This being the general meaning of the terms employed, let us now consider the spiritual truths which are brought before our view by our all-wise Redeemer.

This passage eminently discloses to us the goodness of God. The Lord Jesus Christ is here described as the Bridegroom of his church. What does that fact involve? He was in glory surrounded with angels and archangels who paid him the highest glory and honour; and looking down to this world he saw nothing but ruined rebellious creatures—poor and corrupt—pleased with their corruption, with a dislike to the service of God, indisposed to acknowledge their offences, and disbelieving the fact that they were under the righteous curse of God, as helpless as they were corrupt—and it was these whom he came to save. He was to save those, however, by no mere Almighty fiat, but in a manner which would be worthy of himself and worthy of the Father. He must come into this lower world, take our sorrows

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upon himself, undergo great trial and suffering, and finally endure the painful agony and degradation of the cross. Nothing else would have rescued us; nothing else would have honoured him; for this he came, and this he steadily accomplished with an unparalleled singleness of purpose as well as magnanimity of design; with a stedfastness of conviction which no sorrows and no temptations even for a moment changed, he went through his appointed work on our behalf, and never will cease till what I have read this day is accomplished fully, and that innumerable crowd of once accursed beings is presented to himself perfect in numbers, perfect in holiness, and perfect in bliss, for his companions for ever, and to be loved by him as a man loves his wife. But if it exalts in the highest degree the love of our Saviour,—who, all glorious as he was, chose to suffer that we might not suffer, and eternity my friends, will not be too long to express his praise for this wonderful transaction—so it unfolds to us the love of the Father too, for as much as our text declares the King made a marriage for his Son. It was by his appointment the Lord Jesus came: it was with his consent he suffered. The Father set his heart upon saving our lost souls; and therefore he and his Son are one in goodness to us. If the Lord Jesus “bare our sins in his own body on the tree,” it was the Father who said to his beloved Son, go down and suffer for them—and all eternity will not be too long to express what we owe to that Great Omnipotent Being who pitied us, when he might have exclusively condemned us, and produced for us a salvation perfect in every respect, a gospel adapted to all our necessities and fully calculated to honour all his perfections.

He has thus provided for us a salvation in the person of his Son, and then with Jesus our Saviour, he has given to those who are his disciples, all other suitable blessings too. “He that spared not his own Son, but freely delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?” All those blessings, then, connected with the redemption which were purchased for us by the death of Christ are shaddowed forth by the marriage feast.

God has sent forth a free and gracious invitation to all who have the opportunity of hearing. He sent forth his servants it is said, to call them that were bidden to the wedding, and to say to all who were invited, “Behold I have prepared my dinner, my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready, come unto the marriage;” and when those to whom the message was first sent rejected it, then the same commission was again given to the servants, to go forth and compel as many as they found—that is, by the moral suasion of divine truth—to come to the marriage. God has thus invited men in general to receive Christ our Lord, and with it all other blessings—all that is intended by this marriage feast, is freely offered to every man who has the opportunity of hearing; and the servants of God have been commissioned to make all men hear; and it is obvious that if the church had not been negligent, selfish, worldly, divided, and devoted to worldly things as she has been, instead of living to her high vocation, long ago the world would, not once, but hundreds of times, have heard the invitation that it is God’s will should be made to it. What the invitation says to those who receive it, it says also to all the rest—“Behold I have prepared my dinner, my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready, come to the marriage.” “All things are ready!” What has God made ready for sinners? For those who have hitherto known nothing of the feast; for those who may to this moment have rejected it, what has he prepared? His palace is well prepared; if a man might find in a royal palace on earth massive furniture, noble halls, magnificent candelabras, lamps that dazzle the sight, splendid dresses, and right gorgeous company—you will find all these ten thousand times more brilliant and attractive in heaven which is God’s palace. All that he has given you may possess; and when he says, “all things are ready,” he has prepared, all things that are comprehended in the feast itself, which, without entering on the long detail, may be stated as briefly this—Whatever in heaven can meet and satisfy our wants as immortal beings will be bestowed to the satisfying, and even to the overflowing

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of our faculties, giving abundance of deep and eternal contentment ; " fulness of joy, and pleasures for evermore ;" all these are prepared, as God is true, for every man who hears this message of his mercy, " I have prepared my dinner, my oxen and my fatlings are killed, all things are ready, come to the marriage."

There is even more than this ready ; for we need a fitness for the presence of the monarch as well as the comfort of his possessions, and he has prepared that also, a wedding garment ; the robe of righteousness is ready, for Christ has wrought it out. Holiness is ready, for the Spirit can impart it. It is not for us to work out our own righteousness or holiness ; it is not by our own hands that royal robes are woven ; but there is a robe for every soul who hears the invitation ; nothing is wanting but one for every soul that hears the invitation. What is that one thing ? You know, my hearers, well enough—nothing is wanting but your own consent. Strange that men should refuse it ; refuse to enter into that glorious palace, sit down at that feast of perfect joy, be arrayed in those royal robes—great and wonderful blessings. Is it not strange indeed that any rational soul should deliberately refuse to accept such great blessings ; should refuse to accept the invitation to the marriage supper of the Lamb ? But, my hearers, have you accepted it ? Will you accept it ? I fear not, my hearers, for Jesus has told us in this prophetic parable, the sort of reception which the invitation met with in the world. The first class, to whom it was addressed, " made light of it and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandize ;" and those who receive it thus are not a few, for our Lord draws from his statement, this general and solemn conclusion, " many are called, but few are chosen ;" many have the invitation of the gospel addressed to them ; many were called by his disciples to share in his joy—they were amongst the called, but were not amongst the chosen, for they did not accept the message. Why should I hope that this great crowd is any exception to the rule ? What reason have I to hope that you are all amongst the chosen, though I know you are amongst the called ? There are hundreds of difficulties in the way which a feeble human voice cannot remove. Obstacles deeply seated in your own hearts, obstacles which require an Almighty power to remove them. One is engrossed with his farm, another with his merchandize. Is not this the case with you, my unconverted hearers ? Some of you, at least, I fear are hindered from receiving Christ and the blessings that are attached to discipleship by being immoderately attached to the things of this world. Its pleasures, its honours, its cares, its pursuits, its employments occupy you far more than an immortal being ought to be occupied with them. A certain measure of attention God has placed us in this world to give ; he blames you not for that. It may be subordinate to the promotion of a higher character and the enjoyment of a greater bliss. But we are fallen beings, and in ten thousand instances, that which God has given for our welfare is abused and perverted to the injury of ourselves, and it may be to the ruin of others. He has provided the things of this life for your good, but you have given an exclusive, or at least an exaggerated attention to them, seeking your happiness in them, as though the earth was your home, instead of seeking some consolation from them as pilgrims to your home in heaven. Your heart is not most now set upon the kingdom of God and his righteousness ; and you know, my hearers, that it has not been ; and therefore you naturally care most for that which most occupies your attention and regard ; you make light of that which only occupies a secondary place. God has called us all to " Seek *first* the kingdom of God and his righteousness," to make earthly things distinctly subordinate to the spiritual. He condemns the practice of making earthly things our chief concern from day to day, while the salvation of the soul and the service of God is placed in a subordinate position, yet all those who seek their worldly ends and pleasures, and make light of the gospel necessarily do so ; because when the salvation of the soul and the things of the world clash together, then the more important is put off to a future day.

Let us remember, brethren, that our Lord and Master never deceived any

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one, and his goodness in dying for us is a pledge that he never will deceive, or do that which would occasion any unnecessary alarm, and he has shown in this parable that those who make light of his invitation will fail to reach the blessing. We must not think slightly of these things for which Christ was nailed to the cross ; for if we do make light of them, we shall be disappointed of the blessing that we hope for.

It is said of the first class that were called, "They made light of it; They cared not for the feast, because they had a festival at home : they cared not for the Monarch's kindness, for they reverenced him not, nor loved him. If that can be said of you, my friends, I do not consider that the gospel has ever planted itself in your affections. Earth more than heaven has had possession of your thoughts ; worldly gains have had a greater place in your minds than the cross—therefore, to this day you are unconverted, and on the road to ruin.

But there is another class which is in the same position, with some features in their condition still darker. We read, "the remnant took his servants, and despitefully treated them, and slew them." There are many to whom the gospel comes who are indifferent about it : they do not blame Christians ; they do not deny the truths of the gospel ; they are found perhaps in solemn and decent attendance on public ordinances ; but there is another class to whom the gospel is altogether distasteful ; there are some whose guilt, and pride of heart is such, that the gospel in its purity is absolutely revolting to them ; they cannot bear to take Christ's yoke, and become his servants in everything ; and as the gospel is odious, they dislike its author, and hate those who proclaim it. This class have a positive enmity to religion ; and if their hatred does not issue in palpable persecution, it is because of the altered character of the times. The gospel, I am glad to say, has made such progress in the land, that its professors have ceased to be openly persecuted by judicial authority ; yet, still, in how many hearts does the same spirit remain, which in earlier and worse times occasioned our fathers to suffer death, and the spoiling of their goods, for their discipleship to Christ.

But there is yet another class,—and its representatives may, perhaps be found even in this assembly, and if so, what a fearful thing it must be—there is a class, I say who, secretly or avowedly, dislike the character and claims of the eternal Son of God. Think of the goodness of Christ who has suffered that you, among others, might be happy. How shall you stand before his bar to give an account of such an unnatural enmity ? He sent his Son to rescue such as you, and if you reject him your guilt will be brought out before the world ; and then it will be seen with how little reason, but with how much perseverance you disliked the gospel of Christ. Then will you be excluded—*self-excluded*, from the wedding feast. Another passage similar to our text, tells us that the master of the feast determined that not one of those who refused his invitation should taste of his supper ; and here the same thing is implied, when the monarch said to his servants—"The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy." None of us deserve an admission into this feast ; but these had made themselves unfit for it altogether—even Christ could not receive them worthily while they were still making light of the royal beneficence, and treating with contempt the prince in whose honour the marriage feast was made. But if there are some who are *self-excluded* from the feast, there are others whom Almighty grace determined should be brought in by the work of his Son, of whom it was predicted that he should "see of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied." This is fulfilled when each individual sinner is brought to accept the gospel, and is made happy through the Son of God ; but it shall be more fully accomplished when the whole church of Christ shall be gathered in the last judgment, and when the final separation takes place between the lost and the saved, and when a company, beyond all counting, who have "washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb," shall be admitted to his presence, and dwell in his joy for ever.

There is a fearful description in the parable—"Then saith he to his servants

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The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy. Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage. So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good : and the wedding was furnished with guests." Let us complete this representation by a reference to the parallel passage in Luke, which you will find in the 14th chapter, verses 21 to 24—"So that servant came, and shewed his lord these things. Then the master of the house being angry said to his servant, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind. And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room. And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled. For I say unto you, That none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper." These two passages set before us the condition of those who ultimately became the guests at the royal feast.

First, you observe that all sorts of characters are brought into the wedding feast. The servants went out into the highways, and brought in as many as they found, both bad and good. The gospel is the great remedy provided by infinite wisdom, and adapted to the wants of sinners of every class, of every character, and in every condition. It is a suitable remedy for the whole race. There is not one to whom the provisions of the gospel do not reach : there is not one to whose moral and mental condition it does not reach—bad and good are all the invited ; bad and good alike receive the message. By the "good" here is intended those who, though they are not pious, are estimable, humble, upright, and consistent, in the fulfilment of their duties, and have what they think a righteous heart—such persons as those who have good and upright habits, and whom the sufferages of society in general regard as religious men—these as well as the "bad" are invited to the feast ; and God has made provision what is equally suited to them all. In the gospel sinners may find the supply of all their need. They who enter into the feast have all one feature in common—they are all poor. This is more distinctly brought out in the gospel by Luke. The others made light of it, because they had food of their own, but these accepted of the invitation because they were in want ; they were hungry, and were therefore willing to enter the feast. They were invited, and accepted it, and therefore we conclude that they complied with the terms on which that feast was provided for them. So all that accept the gospel must have been brought to feel that they are guilty before God, and have nothing to recommend them in the sight of God, but feel self-condemned as the poor Publican, when he breathed forth his agonizing prayer, "God be merciful to me a sinner." Unless we come thus, we cannot come at all. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Unless we see that we have no righteousness in ourselves, and no hope except in Christ, we shall not love him. We cannot value Christ, if we do not know ourselves. No man will enter Christ's service, nor willingly take his yoke, unless he is brought low first : the law must do its work upon his heart ; he must be brought low, and lower still. If you do not come to him as a poor, helpless creature, you will not come to him at all.

But there is one more feature common to them. It has been sometimes said—but this must be the result of the most palpable perversion of the meaning of the parable—that this passage teaches that the church must be composed of both bad and good, because both bad and good are invited. But it does not follow that because the bad were invited, they were to remain bad ; and it is utterly impossible that it should be so ; the life of him who sits down to the feast, cannot remain in a state of alienation from God, or the heart continue in a state of rebellion against him. The bad and good were invited ; the bad and good accepted the invitation : the king provided them with suitable attire : each of them was arrayed in a royal dress ; not one garment—for the expression "wedding garment"—*induma* means the whole dress, the inner as well as the outer robe ; it makes a man righteous before God—the outer robe of the righteousness of the Redeemer, and the inner robe the holiness which the Spirit of God imparts—it is entire sanctity and perfect right-

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cousness. The servants of God, we are told by John in his apocalyptic vision, shall stand before their Maker in robes of spotless purity and beauty, having washed them, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

Thus you see that the bad and good, though indiscriminately invited, all receive a great transformation of character : all are brought under the power of the gospel, that they may undergo that regenerating process which all must undergo, before they are fit for heaven. The Holy Spirit changes the heart while it enlightens the understanding, and thus makes them fit to appear before their Maker, clothed in the righteousness of Christ, and the holiness of the Spirit of God.

Numbers were thus brought to welcome their monarch's invitation, and do honour to the prince at his marriage feast. But there was one who represents another class, who seem disposed to receive the gospel : enter into the presence of the monarch, and seems likely to share with the rest in the joys which he has provided, throughout a blissful eternity, but who are ultimately unsuccessful. All the poor persons that were brought into the feast were in garments unfit for the royal presence ; and out of his bounty he had provided for them garments—which each had given him when he came into the hall, or which he might have, by applying for it—which made all the poor guests look like a company of princes in the presence of the monarch. But there was one man—probably not so poor as the rest,—who had a garment better than his neighbours, and therefore, he refused the wedding garment which had been provided for him, and sat down in his plain attire ; by which he manifestly displayed the pride of his heart, and showed disrespect to the monarch who had provided him with the princely attire. "And when the king came in," and saw the company dressed in royal robes, "he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment ; and he said, Friend, how camest thou in hither, not having a wedding garment on ? And he was speechless ; because self-condemned ; because he knew that he had shown palpable disrespect to his benefactor—and therefore, as he had shown dishonour to the sovereign he was excluded from the feast—"Bind him hand and foot, and cast him into outer darkness, where shall be weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth."

What a solemn truth is here presented to us ; it tells us this, my hearers, and may God fix it on all our hearts—that it is utterly impossible for any man to partake of the royal feast, or enter the royal presence, unless he has a wedding dress upon him, unless he is clothed with the righteousness of Christ, and made holy by the work of the Spirit ; refuse it, and your soul will be lost : receive it, and you will be eternally happy. We might suppose that it would never be refused ; but look on society around, and see how often it is done, how many do it. Some are influenced to this course by worldly attractions ; others have enmity in their hearts to Christ and religion, and there are others of whom it is true that selfishness will prove their ruin. They do not look for conversion of the heart by the Holy Spirit, but presume to imagine that they can do without the righteousness of Christ being imputed, or imparted to them. To think and act thus would be the ruin of any soul. How many of you, my hearers, are conscious of possessing and cherishing this bad, this soul-destroying delusion. Christ has offered to take away your righteousness and clothe you with his own, but you have never felt the need of the change. You are diseased, and the Spirit of God would make you whole, but you refuse the remedy ; yet depend it, brethren, if you refuse to be

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saved in the only appointed way, you will be lost, and that for ever—you must be clothed with “the righteousness of saints;” nothing else will answer your purpose; nothing but the righteousness he has provided, and the holiness which the Spirit imparts can fit for the joys of eternity. If you enter you will be ejected from the feast.

“Many are called, but few are chosen.” Is this to be another instance in which the solemn warning takes not full effect? Amongst this crowd is it to be true that “many are called but few chosen?” Will the many go forth from these doors still in sin, and with the curse unremoved? Will many go forth from this Hall rejecting the righteousness of Christ? Will you, my hearers, go forth by that door with your self-righteousness undestroyed with enmity in your heart, still cleaving to the corruption into which you are fallen? Will you still make light of these blessings and pursue the things of the world as if they were capable of filling your immortal soul. May God save you all from the error of your ways. Every day you are in danger: if you are not now converted and justified by the righteousness of Christ, you are in danger of perishing. Our Lord and Saviour, who never caused one unnecessary alarm, said, that if you make light of his gospel and reject it, your salvation is impossible. If you are neglecting the gospel your are in danger of being ultimately and for ever lost; but by accepting this blessing—which I assure you is not to be despised—for that gospel feast of which I have been speaking is soul-satisfying and eternal—you will be happy and in peace for ever.

That you may know better what is reserved for God’s people study this blessed revelation of his will. It is enough to remind you that invited guests to the royal table shall sit in the presence of their Lord; that they who sit there wear royal robes, and therefore it is impossible to believe that there will be any sorrow more, any want, any fear, any danger. Once get within the illuminated hall, and you shall never be excluded again; once obtain the smile of the monarch; and his frown cannot meet you any more—you are safe beyond all harm. Why, the sinner may well ask, has God provided this eternal happiness for me, even when I was degraded, a rebel, and worthless before him. I have misrepresented his character, and spent all my life in serving myself, not him; why then should he have provided this soul-satisfying feast, this eternal happiness for me? The answer might win your heart—he has done it, not because you have merited it at his hands, but because of his own infinite love and benevolence; because he took pleasure in making you happy. It was his love that provided a Saviour for you, and that invited you to the feast; and his Spirit is now waiting to be the medium of your Saviour and salvation.

Lastly, let me say a few words to you, my dear friends, who have received this gift. If you are chosen where many are called, I have at least reason to believe that the chosen few are among the called here to-day. You have accepted this wedding garment: then wear it; it is the only dress in which your souls can appear before God; but with it on you will never be rejected by God. If you are clothed with his righteousness and sanctified by his Spirit, you are fitted for heaven. Let me warn you, if you have put on this sparkling robe never to throw it off—for you are certainly in danger of it—and fall into the ranks of self-righteousness. Perhaps I may be addressing some of my brethren here who if they recur to the last month’s experience will feel that they have done so. When a sinner first comes to God, he sees

that he has nothing to command him to God, and to procure the salvation which God has provided—he feels that he is a poor ruined lost creature, that he has nothing to command him to God ; he becomes sincerely pious, serves God uprightly and honestly, does good in the world ; he is then apt to forget how wretched and ruined he was, and to mingle with his dependence on the righteousness of Christ, some dependence on himself to ; but it is dishonouring to the Saviour, and it is very dangerous to your own souls. See to it then, that you are found clothed in no other garments than the righteousness of Christ, none other robe will stand you before God.

Suffer me, brethren, to give you this further counsel, if we are this day happy believers in Jesus Christ, who has rescued us by his grace alone from that depth of degradation and that mountain of danger—let us bless God for his mercy, and love the Prince of Peace who came down to seek our lost souls, and that provided for us this feast and the dress in which we may, enjoy it, and let us bless our Father in heaven who has secured all this by his own eternal love. Every day live in a careful acknowledgment of his mercy in sending his own Son ; every day bless him that he has prepared a mansion for us in his palace in heaven, and given us a feast which never satiates or tires.

Lastly, my Christian brethren, let us learn from this never to despair of our fellow-sinners. Who is there in this Hall at this day, I care not what may be the guilt of his past life, or what may be the apparent inveteracy of the sins that now chain him down, and seem to present immovable barriers to his salvation, I have hope, because there is not a sinner in this place now, but some of us who now sit at the table enjoying the feast, were once as bad as he. And when you recollect brethren what Christ has done for you, seek to do something from love to him by working and praying for the conversion of sinners around you. Pray with them, reason with them, watch over them ; work with God and for God, still greater and more earnestly every day, and your counsels and your prayers may be the happy means of saving some.

FIRST MAGNITUDES—BIOGRAPHICAL THEOLOGY.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, AUGUST 24, 1851,
BY THE REV. JAMES HAMILTON, D.D.

AT EXETER HALL.

"He was a burning and a shining light."—John v. 35.

ON a cloudless evening and about an hour after the sun has set, the stars begin to twinkle one by one, till ten or a dozen may be detected. And an hour or two later, when the whole glittering host is marshalled, the first ten or twelve are still pre-eminent. And these brightest stars we call first magnitudes. They are the foremost to arrest the up-turned eye, and their fine effulgence will sometimes attract the gaze of incurious rustic or fill young hearts with wonder. These first magnitudes are the landmarks of the firmament. We say that such a lesser star is near to Sirius or Arcturus, or that it has the tint of the Lyre or Orion. And they are the sparks which first kindle scientific ardour; for were the face of the heavens besprinkled with starry dust, with evanescent and inconspicuous points of light, they would draw but little notice. It is the large and brilliant orb which blazes in the forehead of the evening sky, and which makes for a long way round it a loneliness of light—it is this which catches and detains our earthly vision, and kindles into devotion or intelligence some wondering spirit.

And so looking upon the firmament of scripture there are a few characters which outglory all the rest—some ten, twelve, or it may be twenty stars of the first magnitude—burning and shining lights, which will not let the eye away, and which haunt the memory when the eye is closed—brilliant and conspicuous names which seem as landmarks and points of reference—and which are also signals and surprises, arresting notice and awakening wonder—signs and seasons which God has set in the world's historic sky. Enoch, Noah, Job, Abraham, Joseph, Moses, Gideon, Samson, Samuel, David, Solomon, Elijah, Isaiah, Daniel, the Baptist, Peter, John, Stephen, Paul; you have nearly named all the first magnitudes in the Bible's older and newer hemisphere. And though there be hundreds more of lesser lights, and though the lustre of these again is annihilated in the daylight which the Son of Righteousness makes, still these are the over-mastering names which our fancy first calls up in looking back on the Bible story; the main foci into

which God has condensed the lessons which he would teach us through the persons of our fellow-men.

Now we have a great deal of biography; yes, a great deal of religious biography, besides that which the Bible contains. But there is one respect in which the Bible specimens are absolutely unique. In all other cases man writes the tale of man; in these cases it is written by God. The Bible narratives are of all the clearest and most complete; for they are the only narratives written in the pure and penetrating light of the upper sanctuary. When Beza wrote the life of Calvin, he might tell all that intimate friendship could discover, or affectionate memory could treasure up; and when Augustine wrote his own life, he might confess the worst which severe self-scrutiny could reveal, or a memory faithful to every misdeed could recall. But the utmost which either could record with any certainty was personal history; the self prompted and independent doings of the isolated man. Neither the man who wrote his own biography, nor the man who wrote the biography of his friend, could tell precisely and infallibly how much of Divine Providence wrought in particular incidents, nor how much of Divine grace developed in particular propensities and dispositions. They could tell what the man was and what he did; but they could not tell so confidently how many of his doings and dispositions originated in God, and how many in himself, and how many in the devil. But this most profound and instructive narration is what the Bible supplies. It shows us not only the workings of the heart and the movements of the outward history, but it unveils those springs of action which were external to the individual altogether. It shows that hand sometimes fiendish and malign, oftener benign and omnipotent, which was constantly controlling the steps and moulding the character of a creature in whose destinies three worlds contended. And it is this which gives its interest to Bible biography. It is a record not of heroes, but of saints. It tells not of valiant spirits, but of vessels of mercy; not of men whose own powerful will created them, but whom the more powerful will of God made mighty and illustrious. It tells not of shining lights who kindled their own fire, but it tells of starry apertures which Jehovah struck out in our firmament of flesh, "to let his own glories through." And in studying these Bible worthies, men thus raised up and directed by God, there are two aspects in which it is instructive to consider them. We may either look mainly to their history or mainly to their character; and in the one aspect we shall see them as *manifestations* of what God is, and in the other as the *models* of what he would have us be: stars of glory revealing God, and stars of guidance directing us.

Take for example Noah. His ark was builded, and the time was come that he should enter it. But there was something very formidable in that final and conclusive step. To look over these coming months and think of all their chances and all their perils, to know that for a year together he

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should be waif on the world of waters. And what if the flood should never ebb and the earth never again should dry? And what if their dreary ship should wander age by age and never touch another shore? And what if some calamity should occur meanwhile, and dashed on some beetling coast the frail and clumsy vessel should go down? And then there was something very damping in the sense of powerlessness. To feel that he had no control over his floating house; to have no rudder by which he could regulate its course; no scrap of canvas that he might stretch, no paddle that he might pull, so as to speed it past the place of danger or guide it into smoother water; to have not even a loop-hole or look-out, except a hole which showed the rotten sky; to be thus delivered in the dark, to be thus preserved by being made a prisoner, was a painful inversion of that independency and self-sufficiency which are natural to us all. And then to see the lofty mountains which looked like ready-made retreats, to think how unlikely it was that these ever should be overwhelmed, and at all events, to reason how much likelier and more lasting asylums they would prove than this precarious timber-raft, and to see the vast majority counting on these as abundantly sufficient. To bid adieu to all these chances of preservation and adventure life, and every interest on the single cast of this one contrivance, looked a fearful and tremendous step. But the patriarch took it. He felt that this contrivance was as mighty as the Divine command, and he rejoiced to be the prisoner of a promise-keeping God. Fearless and unfaltering he stepped in, and when the clap of the closing door gave the sign to the waiting thunder, Noah felt that he was now the guest of God, and need fear no farther ill. And when the drowning year was done, and from the opened door he and his whole family and his mute fellow-passengers issued one by one, and none were missing, he saw how safe is the craziest craft which Omnipotence holds in the hollow of his hand, and how sure the port after the strangest voyage, where Jehovah holds the helm. "Which thing was written for our learning." There are arks which we, my friends, are also called to enter. One ark is the great atonement. To embark our souls with all their everlasting interests, in the finished work of Immanuel; this is a step which many cannot take. They look up and they see the lofty peaks. They see the sublime heights of piety which some have reached. "Oh, if I were only as good as Paul or John; if I were only as devout as David Brainerd, as heavenly-minded as Henry Martyn." And they try to clamber up to some holy or virtuous elevation; for they think if they were only good enough, high enough in attainment and character, they would escape the wrath to come. Or if they can be persuaded to look at the provided means of safety, they would like the atonement far better if it allowed them something to do. But merely to enter into it and so be rescued by it; there seems something utterly inadequate and ignobly easy in this simple plan. To steer the ark, to row it, to thrust it along, to spread the sails, something active and positive

they would desire ; but merely to go in and stay in ; to be not workers nor promoters, but merely inmates and passengers ; oh ! there is self-denial and self-emptying here ! Beloved hearers ! have you got the length of Noah and Noah's family ? Do you feel that the Divine constitution—do you perceive that the command and promise of God make the Surety's righteousness safety sufficient ? And are you content to be neither the builders nor the navigators of the ark, but its mere occupants ? Oh ! happy are you if thus reconciled to God's gracious and easy plan ! And blessed will you be that day when the ark opens on the Ararat of Immortality, and gives good account of all who ever entered it.

And again ; it is like entering the ark when called to perform some arduous or self-sacrificing duty. Frequently in this ill-conditioned world obligation and personal interest are quite opposed—and sometimes in commencing a course of well-doing, the disciple of Jesus has to forsake houses and lands, to let go tempting bargains, or refuse ensnaring compacts, or even to renounce a good appointment, and quit a lucrative calling. And in obeying the Divine command, and casting himself on the Providence of God, the believer is like the patriarch entering the dark and unproved ark. He knows not what shall be the issue. There is no crevice by which he can discern the course along which he is drifting—no aperture to cheer him with the sight of emerging peaks or nearer land—no window, except one overhead, to teach him that he must look up, and look no other way. And many a time the winds are loud and the waters high. In such a storm, he should not greatly wonder, though the whole went down, and a few spars on the billows were all that told the tale. But somehow or other, on the whole, his heart keeps up, till one day the door opens and lets him out on a large and wealthy land, and he finds how good it is to be piloted blindfold to such a pleasant place.—But whatever you may think of this unreasoning abandonment of yourself to the commands of God, and whatever you may think of entrusting all your salvation to the completed work of another,—there is one occasion when the strongest swimmer may well be thankful for some such asylum. When a believer comes to die, he may have all the reluctance and all the fears which are natural to flesh and blood. He is bound for an unknown region—a world to which he has never been before—nay, a world of which he knows not the locality. And he is leaving behind him that old and essential comrade—his corporeal frame, his spirit's mate and servant during all this earthly pilgrimage ; and he does not want to be done with it conclusively. He feels as if he should again like to have its telescope and microscope to look upon the works of God ; and its vocal organs to hold communion with those who may wear similar bodies elsewhere. And a whole host of queries and anxieties would rush into his mind if dying, and the things which come after dying, were matters which he had to manage for himself. But all these anxious thoughts are superseded. Arrived at the ocean's edge, he finds an ark prepared, and he finds a kind and

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skilful pilot who undertakes it all. Blessed Saviour, wilt thou receive my spirit? "Yes, and this day it shall be with me in paradise." And wilt thou take charge of my sleeping dust? "Yes, and I will raise it up at the last day." And wilt thou take charge of those whom I leave behind? "Yes, and I will preserve them alive—let them trust in me." And he steps into the ark—he sleeps in Jesus, and soon leaps forth to a new world on the hills of immortality. To every age the history of Noah has been a burning and shining light, and the great lesson it has taught is the *faithfulness* of God—the wisdom of simply trusting him, and promptly complying with his commands; and it tells to every prisoner of hope, and every pilgrim in the dark, "The Lord knoweth how to deliver them who put their trust in him."

What we stated in the outset was, that the Bible supplies us with a *biographical theology*—that from the peculiar way in which its narratives are written, it exemplifies the various perfections of God by shewing their developments and dealings with particular persons. We have seen that if the Bible relates the faith of Noah, it records still more signally the faithfulness of Jehovah. And if another instance be desired, we might name the patriarch Joseph. Viewed on the human side, we have in his memoirs the history of a pious youth—full of brotherly kindness and filial affection, and by his good conduct and great sagacity, rising to a station where he was enabled to rescue from ruin his own family, and be the princely benefactor of his unnatural brethren: but viewed on the Divine side, we almost lose sight of the pious youth, and see nothing but God's momentary and marvellous providence. Parting at the pit's mouth, we see the Arabs riding off with their young captive, and regardless of his cries, we see the shepherds, his savage and inhuman brothers, returning to their flocks, and resuming their sulky road to Padan Aran—to all appearance parted for ever. The desert wind soon swept out the camel tracks, and next rains new grass sprang up where Jacob's sons had grazed their flocks. But unseen by man, a thread hitherto single, had split, and had uncoiled from the edges of that pit—too fine for human eye to see, or human sense to follow, but strong as the fiat of Omnipotence. From the mouth of that pit the divided thread travels two different ways—the one from Dothan travels up to the vale of Hebron, and enters the tent of an old man with a snowy beard, weeping blinding tears over a bloody mantle which they spread before him, and it travels on through chequered years of weal and woe, during which the old man draws many a heavy sigh, and amidst all their roughness and rivalry, a guilty secret seems to bind his coarse and selfish sons to one another, till by and by you see a motley caravan taking the southern track, and quitting the empty garners and burnt acres of Palestine, the lean asses and the lank and haggard shepherds limp down to Egypt; and still as they move on the fated filament, the mystic clue spins out from behind their feet. And from the same pit in Dothan, the other branch of the unbroken thread follows

the Ishmaelites down to On. It enters a palace door, descends to a dungeon—emerges again, darts up towards Pharaoh's throne, and wherever the second chariot in the kingdom rolls, that clue uncoils behind it, till after years of grandeur the sumptuous vizier and the haggard shepherds stand front to front, and the thread which split at Dothan meets again in Pharaoh's palace, and becomes a united line once more. And in such a parting, guided round to such a meeting, we have not so much a romantic story as the mind of God revealed. Joseph's career is just predestination made familiar, and the providence of God made palpable. It burns and shines with present Deity; and whilst it says to the sinner, Be sure your sins will find you out, and tells that what man means for evil, God manages for good, it also proclaims—

“Oh, but the counsel of the Lord
Doth stand for ever sure;
And of his heart the purposes,
From age to age endure.”

Let us hasten now from those whose history gives us theologic light, to those whose characters emit a practical and directing radiance to ourselves.

Shortly before these words were spoken a singular star was seen. Wise men were looking at the Chaldee sky, when their vision was filled with an unwonted brilliance. They were in the east, and this new orb shone westward, and so bright and benignant was its beam, that it promised tidings of great joy. So alluring and articulate did it shine that they resolved to obey the sign, and follow where its silvery finger pointed. And on they marched—and on moved the star. On moved the star, but encouraging and near the earth, and the faster that they followed the more gladly did it gleam, and to their quickened steps promised a nearer rest and a secret soon to be revealed. And though they were all tired with their weary tramp, every time they looked they saw so much of stedfast purpose in its even path, and so much of ripening promise in its larger ray, that they mustered energy anew, and journeyed, till over Jordan's rippling tide, and through Jerusalem's sounding streets, and across the bosky hills of Judah, it took them on to Bethlehem—and over a stable it stopped and its downward light said, Lo! and then in a smiling burst it bade them welcome to their journey's end, and left its followers alone with the infant Saviour; and when they left the stable their strange guide had vanished from their view. John the Baptist was that burning and shining light. There was something startling in the sudden effulgence with which he fired the Hebrew sky. All Jerusalem, and all the country beyond Jordan ran out to look—but the more that hastened towards him, the serener grew his light, and the softer was his promise of some better thing to come. And charmed by his pure heavenliness, feeling that such sanctity could never lead them wrong, a goodly number followed; and the longer that they lingered, and the farther that they followed, the more mellow grew the light, and the more eager the triumph of the precursor's eye—till one evening he exclaimed, “Behold the Lamb of God”—and leaving his disciples in the company of Jesus, lost in the brighter light with gentle speed he melted from their view.

And in this first magnitude, we, my dear friends, who are ministers, and pastors, and teachers have a light which burns and shines a pattern to ourselves. Let John's *purity* be our pattern. No star can be a guide which is not

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conspicuous, and none is an appropriate guide to Jesus which does not shine with a soft and inviting ray. The Baptist kept himself pure. From his college in the hill-country, from his study in the desert, he issued on his public work a free and unfettered man ; and unencumbered by affairs of this life, he entered on his office with no prejudice against his ministry arising from personal pique, or from his own observed infirmities—with no prejudice against his ministry save that arising from the truths he told. And so it behoves us to pray and labour after similar blamelessness ; and if ours be the more trying predicament of not living in hermit isolation ; but if we must mix daily in affairs of this life—if we must move in the daily mêlée, and at a million points come in contact with both sacred and secular men, we have the more need to beseech the Father of Lights so to fill us with himself that still our light shall shine. And then again, we have a pattern and reproof in John's preference of Jesus. "He must increase, but I must decrease. He that cometh after me is preferred before me." The Baptist saw things as they really are. He had no contempt for nature. He loved it as every ingenuous mind will love it, and he filled his sermons from its dear treasury more than any preacher save his Master. He had no contempt for man. Full conscious of man's vileness, and familiar with that "viper," sin, he still had all the fondness and affinities of a noble heart, and shewed how loveable he was by being much beloved. But lovely as nature was, and long as he had lingered in her company, and beloved as disciples were—there was an excelling glory which tamed all other things. He knew the grace and majesty of Jesus Christ. Within that veil of lowlihood he recognized the mighty God, and he touched adoringly the latchet which he loosed. And he knew that Saviour's errand ; and when pointing others to the Lamb of God, it rushed over the Baptist's spirit with affecting wonder that he himself was one of those sinners for whom that Lamb must shed his blood. And this Saviour's glory was all his joy. Those admiring and affectionate followers who had gathered round himself he sought to transfer to the Lord Jesus ; and band by band, on the banks of Jordan, and in Herod's prison, he disentangled himself from most, and rejoiced to think before he died that like himself they had found Messias. And in this he was a model to us all. Oh, that our own souls burned and shone with Immanuel's love, and if any liked us or followed us, would that at last, like the wise men following the star, they found themselves at Bethlehem ! Like his disciples following the Baptist, would that they found themselves at last with the Lamb of God ! And, indeed, let in the love of Jesus would light up our character and make our bosoms glow. It would make us inevitable evangelists, pioneers and epistles of Christ wherever we were and however employed—and would approximate our character to his who sings of himself—

"His only righteousness I shew,
His saving truth proclaim;
'Tis all my business here below,
To cry, 'Behold the Lamb!'

Happy, if with my latest breath,
I may but gasp his name;
Preach him to all, and cry in death,
'Behold, behold the Lamb.'"

Looking again into the Bible firmament, looking at what may be called the Messianic hemisphere, the period cotemporary with an incarnate Saviour, if

John the Baptist was the morning star, John the Evangelist was the star of evening;—with soul so candid, with affections so sanctified and susceptible, as to give back well nigh all the beams which the Sun of Righteousness shed on him, the Hesperus of the gospel history, the near satellite and bright mirror of his Lord, so that the Polycarp or other primitive Christian who had seen St. John could only have seen more by seeing Jesus himself. Let us look a moment at him. Dear disciple, what makes thee so unique? Why is it that when we look to Apollos we think of eloquence, or to Stephen we think of youthful fire and the martyr's crown, or to Paul we think of fervour and the cross, or to Peter we think of impetuous courage; but we think of love, and we think of Jesus when we look to thee? Wherefore, like a pearl on flame, so gentle yet so bright, dost thou keep thy matchless station in the deepening sky? And how is it that, like an angel nestled in a golden cloud, thou lookest down on a dark world so hopeful, and on a world from which thy brethren all have passed, and where thou thyself art persecuted, so kindly and so little sad? "He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God. That which we have seen of the Word of Life declare we unto you, that ye may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ." Oh, yes, my dear hearers, this was the secret of it all. John himself was but a clod, but Jesus kindled him into a burning and shining star. John was a sinner once, but he laid his sins on Jesus trustfully and tenderly he transferred his guilt to the Saviour, and in doing it felt no fear; for it was "the Lamb" of God whom he beheld bearing the sin of the world away. And feeling ever after as a pardoned sinner, he let in the love which his Saviour felt for him. He could not account for it. Jesus had loved him, he could not tell why; but neither could he dispute nor deny it. The Saviour loved him, and he let in the Saviour's love; and along with that love the Spirit of Jesus entered. The soul of the disciple grew at once happy and heavenly, and the flame was kindled which rapidly consumed his dross and left him bright with that unusual holiness.

And so, dear hearers, there is no way to get inward peace, or give forth visible graciousness, like copying John's implicit faith,—his unhesitating receptiveness. Let in the Saviour's love. You know that it is exceeding abundant—let it abound towards you. Like John, lay your head on Jesus' bosom, but not a head muffled and bandaged round by doubts, and misgivings, and notions of your own: but apply there a frank and confiding ear, and listen to what Immanuel's heart is saying. What is it saying? "Son, be of good cheer; thy sins are forgiven. Come unto me, and I will give thee rest. Father, I will that this one whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that he may behold my glory." Sinner, listen, and let in that love. Leave your sins with Jesus, and he will answer for them. His blood will wash them all away. Leave your soul with Jesus: he will give good account of it: he will keep it safe to heaven. Leave your future lot with Jesus, and he will choose the very best for you—that tempering of mercy with trial which will best tend to present you faultless before the presence of his glory, and all of which you may accept cheerfully, for it comes from the dear hand of the Mediator.

CHRISTIAN STEADFASTNESS.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY EVENING, AUGUST 17, 1851,

BY THE REV. CHARLES STOVEL,

AT EXETER HALL.

"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."—1 Cor. xv. 58.

This passage concludes the discourse of St. Paul on the resurrection from the dead. The proper study of that discourse is important to us on many accounts. First, the trial of faith relating to the event of the resurrection itself, which called for the discourse when Paul was writing to Corinth, is realized in the experience of Christians of our time. The idea of a resurrection is as hostile to the habits, the faculties, and the comprehension of men now as it was when Paul conducted his ministry; and therein resisted the superstitions of Greece. Over the whole prospect in which it is presented to our view, the veil of mortality is extended with as thick a gloom, and with aspects as fearful to us as to men of any former age. We feel the chilling influence of death as they did, with not less fear we shudder at its causes and consequences. All the motives remain to induce in us a stifling of any expectation that those who have died in sin will rise again to judgment which have ever urged the minds of men in that direction. Our dread is not less deep, and not less guilty than that of our forefathers, and, therefore, with no less tenacity of will, do we adhere to any soothing difficulty which is presented by the skilful unbeliever. We look upon the dead and say, "With what energy shall they rise? We also look upon the vacant place of the departed, and ask, "With what body do they come?" In fact, with all the difficulties that have ever attended the event, all the motives remain to induce an obscuration of its certainty; and, therefore, the study of this apostolical demonstration is as important to us as it was to the Corinthians by whom it was first received. Secondly, Everything that obscures the event of our resurrection from the dead by making it appear less distinct or less certain, will have the same practical effect now which it had in former times. It inverts the whole admonitory lessons of mortality; it sophisticates the utterances of death itself. It gives an impulse to those very appetites by which death is hastened forward, and augments the sum of which death constitutes the doom, it reasons from desperate premises to desperate conclusions; it cries in the ear of perishing mortality, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die." By obliterating the still more awful future, it takes away all motive of mutual solicitude in the present, and extinguishes the hope of any—much more of any better estate; it destroys the activity of all exertion in which the possessors of mercy may be now employed. That scepticism makes their proclamation vain; it makes the faith of them vain; it leaves the believer yet in his sins; it falsifies the testimony which proves that "he who died for our sins rose again for our justification." It infers that those who have fallen asleep in Christ, have perished, and that all the labour by which they were lead to believe, and all the conflicts of their faith were fruitless. As it turns the dominion of mortality into licentiousness, so it turns the whole scheme of practice in the Christian's life to utter ridicule. The comprehension of the apostle's arguments, therefore, by which this scepticism can be rebutted is important to us, because when this resurrection from the dead ceases to exert an influence upon the mind, little remains to withhold humanity from plunging into the grossest wrongs, he is left with nothing whatever to sustain and reward the solicitude attendant on a life of faith, or the constancy and fulness which should characterize the operations of Christian zeal. The whole argument of Saint Paul may, however, be condensed into two points. First, he pleads that the dead have been raised, and therefore the event is possible. Secondly, he shows that the resurrection of the dead has been decreed, and therefore it is sure.

What explanation of the apostle's reasoning can be applied which would not be infinitely inferior to that which is given to us in the words of his own

Epistle. This amplification is adequate to all practicable purposes, and may be studied by each individual at leisure. This will enable us, therefore, to fix our attention on the practical use to which his argument is here applied. When writing the words of our text, the apostle had finished his reasoning and resumed the dignity of his didactic style. "Behold," he saith, "I show you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruption must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be unto God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."

All that is required in realizing the force of this commandment of the apostle will follow the consideration of two particulars. First, what is the work which is here defined so particularly, "your labour in the Lord?" and secondly, what is the peculiar value derived to us from the fact of the resurrection? These two points we shall endeavour to explain.

1st. As to "your labour in the Lord." The pronoun in the expression is used in conformity with the introduction to the apostle's letter—"To them who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints with all them in every place that call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord," he saith, "Grace be unto you." And then "your labour is not in vain in the Lord." His words, therefore, clearly separate those who are "called to be saints," and who "call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord," from all other men; as having a labour which they know can never be in vain.

But "their labour in the Lord," may be justly distinguished from ordinary labour, of which this feature cannot be affirmed. The words therefore, point out a species of exertion which is defined by the Lord's direction, and which is sustained by the Lord's support, in which the Lord himself has granted the only authority, and for which the Lord alone can supply sufficient strength. Hence the same *work* is in a former clause, designated the "work of the Lord; because it is a work in which he is the *principal*, and they are the *subordinates*. He directeth and sustaineth the whole process, and they labour under his command, while depending on his resources. It is, therefore, called in one place, *the Lord's work*, and in another, *their work in the Lord*.

In examining the epistle we shall find this work carefully distinguished from other things which prevailed at Corinth which were sinful, and from others of a different kind, but which could not, in any case, be confounded with the *work of the Lord*. This remark applies to their toleration of incest; their participation with idolators; their party animosities; their disorder at the Lord's Supper, and their want of charity in using their spiritual gifts, as well as to some domestic matters referred to in this epistle. Some of these things were obviously criminal: others of them were more worthy of toleration, if not of regard, but none of them could be designated, "labour in the Lord." In many instances he did not direct, but forbid them. He did not sustain, but rebuke and chastise them. Combined with his source of information, however, we have others in the epistle which show what that labour in the Lord is with more positive certainty. The church is called, "God's husbandry," and "God's building," and all who are engaged in its planting, edification, and enlargement, the apostle and his brethren are here designated, "labourers together with God." One "planteth," another "watereth," and *God giveth the increase.*" The work which is so performed is tried as by fire, to see of what sort it is; while every faithful labourer is promised an adequate reward when his work is found to stand. In this work the apostle declares that we are "a sweet smelling savour unto the Lord: both in them who are saved, and in them which are lost." To prepare each one for this particular service, diversities of gifts is granted, but all by the same Spirit; and, as members of one body they are called to diversity of operation, but the same God worketh all in all. Each one, therefore, is called to execute the function to which he is appointed.

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with the unconscious ease of perfect health, and with the harmonizing influence of Christian charity. All are to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith—"for as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office, so we being many are one body in Christ, and members one of another; having these gifts according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy let us prophecy, according to the proportion of faith; or ministry, let us wait on our ministry; he that teacheth on teaching; or he that exhorteth on exhortation; he that giveth let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness. Let love be without dissimulation; abhor that which is evil, cleave to that which is good." In all these instructions, as in others like them—found in all his letters—the apostle wishes us to understand that the work of the Lord consists in whatever he proposes and directs his servants to do in the enlargement and edification of his church, that sinners may be added to it in his own way, by true repentance and a living faith, as gold and silver and precious stones, which bear the fire and beautify the building; that by their influence, or rather that by the operation of Divine grace in them, a testimony to the accessibility and value of Divine grace may be borne, which the men of this world may both see and feel; and which God himself may recognize in the awful discriminations of his final judgment.

Referring to this service as labourers together with God in promoting the salvation of mankind, and in preparing for the judgment of the last day, it is said of all believers united to Christ—"We are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." In this work Christ the Lord is the principal, and we subordinates. It is therefore the work of the Lord which is done that he may be glorified, and hence in the trials of the present world, believers, though sincere, are prone to be discouraged and defective in their zeal. Therefore when the certainty of our resurrection from the dead had been revealed with a pathos and earnestness which are absolutely profound, it is said—"My beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."

Nothing can be more easy than the adapting of these truths to present use. Whatever the gifts may be with which an individual is endowed, and what opportunities soever are brought within his reach, the very grace by which they are granted to men implies an obligation that they should be diligently used. All the positive instructions which are given in Holy Scripture to believers, as such, are also binding on them at all times, whether they relate to personal worship, improvement, or usefulness. The incorporated body of believers is now as ever subjected to the spirit which dwells therein to further its enlargement, and to multiply its joys. Wherever these gifts may be used, therefore, the exhortation of the apostle may be applied, wherever the precepts of scripture can be enforced, there the exhortation stands good; and wherever the spirit gives divine and heavenly influence, there the commandments must take effect. It adds, in every department of Christian service an obligation to abound in whatever it hath become our duty, or our privilege to do. In prayer, in praise, in all reciprocations of Christian love; in all the means which can, in conformity with the divine teaching, be used in bringing sinners to repent of sin, and to faith in Christ, in leading them to the Redeemer; in awakening the obdurate by sowings of eternal truth; in cheering the broken-hearted by promises of mercy, and in bearing your own experimental testimony to its accessibility and worth, in short, by whatever means, and in what way soever the recipient of mercy may exalt its author in this dark world, and commend its blessings to the acceptance and use of his fellow sinners; he is not only bound to do it, but to do it with all his might; to add in adversity, fortitude; and constancy, to obedience, and to serve in the ardour of an experimental zeal as filled with the energy of love, and seeing the object which he wishes to attain in the light of eternity, in its relation to the resurrection of the dead. This is that work of the Lord to which we are led by the apostle's words: but—

Second. This labour of the Lord derives a peculiar value from the resurrection, because of its relation to the judgment, and because of the effect which the judgment must exert on the objects which this labour is intended to secure. "It is appointed unto all men once to die, and after this the judgment." Had this passage been written alone, we might have concluded that judgment was immediately

consequent upon death. From many intimations of scripture, it would seem, that at the instant of death, a judicial discrimination takes place, which is sufficiently clear to indicate the final and perfected event; but the judgment itself does not transpire upon the soul without the body, but upon both, when the body has been raised from death. We have also intimation in scripture of the first resurrection, in which the believer only will participate; while the final resurrection, which includes all the dead, will precede the final act of judgment, and the consummation of the mediatorial kingdom. So far as the one idea of the resurrection from the dead is concerned, the apostle's reasoning applies to both these events; but the latter is filling his thoughts while he speaks of the last enemy that shall be destroyed, the subversion of the grave, and the giving up of his kingdom to God, even the Father, that God may be all in all. By this event the purposes of mercy will have reached their consummation, and its proclamation will therefore cease. From this point the mind in its most powerful effort looks forward into an unfathomable future where, with many things undefined, this at least, is certain, that by no interposition whatever can the elements of either imperative be changed from good to evil, or from evil to good. Each will augment its capabilities, expand in its inheritors, for suffering or enjoyment through all the duration which is before us; but no one shall be changed to the reverse. A gulf that cannot be passed separates the two destinies, and on each is seen engraved, as in characters of adamant, the words *for ever!* Every joy comes upon the mind enhanced in value, and every sorrow rolls upon the heart with greater weight and bitterness because of the impression with which it is combined,—the unalterable permanence. Each must be what he then becomes, for ever, and it is impossible for faith to make, as it will be for experience to realize this terrible distribution of changeless destinies, without feeling that, that labour cannot be in vain on which so remorseless, so inflexible, and overwhelming an alternative depends.

But we must not wait to dwell upon aspects of futurity which, one from gloom and the other from glory, are placed beyond our perfect comprehension—we must hasten to consider those distinct objects contemplated in the "work of the Lord," on which the fact of our final judgment may, with the clearest susceptibility, be realized. Of these, four may be taken as examples—*Regeneration*, in which the spiritual life begins. *Conversion*, in which that spiritual life is developed. *Justification*, in which its privilege is legalized—and *Sanctification*, in which it advances towards its covenanted perfection. All these are seen and realized upon earth, though not without disadvantage, but at the resurrection, and where they are held in the light of that event, they assume a greater grandeur, and they call for greater zeal in every effort to produce them.

But before these points can be studied well, we must consider the influence of this final resurrection as it is realized in limiting the principle to which these facts must all be traced; while Christians are labouring on earth to secure the regeneration of sinners, and their conversion to God in Christ, that mercy which is visiting the earth in all its dispensations, occupies and fills the throne of government. Its language accords with that of the apostle—"Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. For he hath made him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." While space for Christian activity is granted upon earth, this embassage of redemption and forgiving love is in full and authoritative action. After the first resurrection, whatever form the kingdom of mercy may assume, it is not conceivable that during its continuance in the hands of the Redeemer, the power of repentance should be regarded with indifference, or that salvation should be refused to those that are made willing to receive it in the Lord. But when the event referred to in the text has taken place, when Christ shall have given up the kingdom to God, even the Father; then those who ask for admission will not be admitted, those who repent of their folly will find no compassion, to those who knock the door shall not be opened; the proclamation will then be, "the door is shut!" All the modifications of tenderness, which divine compassion has assumed in acting upon the human heart, will then give place to a divine severity, which cannot by any possibility be changed. Instead of the persuasive words, "Come now, let us reason together;" "Seek the Lord while he may be found;" and "whosoever will let him come;"

shall be said, and written, and sealed—"He that is unjust let him be unjust still, and he that is filthy let him be filthy still, and he that is righteous let him be righteous still, and he that is holy let him be holy still." Holiness in God will then assume its native inflexible severity to sin and unbelief in all their forms. It will expound the terrifying word damnation, by driving the wicked away in his wickedness; and it will shew the solemnity of the labour by which mercy is brought home to the hearts of man by covering its despisers with eternal shame, and cutting off from them its benefits for ever.

In comparison with this reserved blackness of darkness, the certain doom of all who perish in the final judgment, the value of those effects which Christian labour is designed to produce upon earth, may, though not in all its delicacy and fulness, yet with an impressive outline, be seen and studied; and first, *Regeneration*; "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." Hence the diligence which is used to disseminate that word, and in shewing by the living voice its application to the affairs of human life; when this has taken effect upon the individual mind, produced in the heart "repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ," then spiritual life is begun, and to such it may be said, "God of his own will begat us by the word of truth." "You hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins." This production of the spiritual life in man is the first aim in all Christian exertion, and, in securing it the hand of God is with his servants in methods of working which reveal his love, his wisdom, his faithfulness and power. We may also see much of its value in the hope and activity to which it advances in the present state, but here even in its best forms it is veiled with adversity and crippled with defect. If stinted only in the aspect afforded by its value in the present life, the estimation is specifically given. "*Then are we of all men most miserable.*" The gulph of mortality therefore must, either in thought or in experience, be passed before the value of regeneration can be fully seen. If received only in connexion with the present time, it presents a mass of sympathies and solicitudes which evolves in bitterness and conflict, and which terminates in death, but seen in the glory of our final resurrection, it exhibits those sympathies freed from all solicitude, evolving without any pain, sustained from an imperishable source; expanding and ripening in all other exercises, and leading to unlimited communion with God.

2nd. Conversion consists in the voluntary acts by which, in the declared purposes of a whole life, or any particular feature of the former social practice, an open separation is affected between the sinner and the world: and this union with the Saviour is declared and acted upon. It is a turning *from sin*; and turning *to the Lord*. If considered only in the light of present experience, our feeling of its value is diminished by its manifest defectiveness, and its multifarious trials. Often when conversion is recognized as sincere, it is found that its subject must be converted again. New discoveries of sin in open practices of the world, create the necessity for turning away again from its error and crime, while the guilty receive forbearance, the believer endures affliction, and a similarity in deportment is cultivated which scarcely seems to justify the decision which is enforced. The trial which a sincere conversion thus involves is always great; and in the apostle's time, it was called a being baptized on account of the dead—or as Chrysostom explains the words, "On the hope of a resurrection from the dead." Every disciple was then called upon to confess his hopes of a resurrection from death, because the very day after his confession he might be made to endure martyrdom, or become an apostate, and consistency in the Christian life could therefore be sustained only on the hope which was so avowed. It is then only, and never till then, when the hope of a resurrection is before us, that a sure conversion can be estimated at its real value. Then only can its dangers be escaped, and its trials be endured. Without the resurrection from the dead before us, it seems the declaration of a difference from worldly men on insufficient ground: but with this before us, it is seen to be the separation from that which God has absolutely doomed. Amidst the flattering blandishments created by the sinful nature, under Divine forbearance, it seems little: but with the world in flames, when realizing the consequence of the final judgment, when hearing the lamentation of the lost—when listening to the song of the redeemed, it will be most momentous to know that we, or that others by our means have been turned from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God.

3rd. Justification confirms a sinner, when converted, in his hope and privilege in Christ. It declares him to be under the protective administration of Divine governance. Divine inspiration exhibits the extent of this privilege in terms of the highest import. Believers are justified by faith ; "justified freely" by grace ; they are justified in appealing from all things written in the law ; they have power to become the sons of God, though the law had condemned them as guilty ; and if sons, then are they heirs, "heirs of God, and joint heirs with our Lord Jesus Christ." Yet is all this glory of spiritual privilege clouded by present trial, and the children of God appear, in many instances, as if forsaken by their Father. While the justification of their privilege often assumes the aspect of a legal figment, it then seems a feature in human affairs, which deserves but little labour in producing it, and awakens but little solicitude if it be supposed to be wanting. Our present state, with its practical features, is made to becloud our final destinies, and then justification is made to appear of little worth. But let the grave have its proper place in our calculation, and let it be combined with the certainty of a resurrection ; let this prepare resuscitated humanity to stand before the seat of final judgment, and then that will not appear to have been "labour in vain," which led the sinner to Christ, to have faith in his blood for the justification which is there derived—by forming in the day of doom an only protection, will prove itself indispensable to every ground on which our existence could, by any possibility whatever be decreed.

4th. The sanctification to which mercy conducts its recipients appears greater or more important when it becomes studied in the light of the resurrection from the dead. When separated from this event, the holiness to which it conducts us is lowered in our estimation to such standards only as are used within our knowledge and experience among men. The resurrection raises all our thoughts to God. It makes us feel that his Almighty power can be exerted in producing death, and in recovering the victims of death to life, rendering the subjects of such changes conformable to his purpose, and demonstrative of his glory. But this can be effected by persons rising from death to judgment only by one of two ways. Each individual must rise and appear as a vessel of wrath fitted for destruction, or as a vessel of mercy fitted for his Maker's use. Each of them, therefore, must rise from his grave, and at the resurrection he must become prepared to reveal the glory of God even when struck by final vengeance into ruin and despair, or when exalted in his own fellowship and mercy to more than the joy of our long lost paradise. It was this alternative which forced the apostle Paul to say—"Who is sufficient for these things?" And never till this alternative is steadily kept in mind, shall we rightly appreciate that labour upon earth on which our inheritance in its terms depends.

On these grounds, therefore, (for others quite as obvious are passed by,) because it gives its true practical character to that labour by which spiritual life, conversion, justification, and holiness, are produced in man, the resurrection from death was, by the apostle Paul, placed beyond all doubt. He supplies evidence in his own labour and earnestness, feeling that his duty was not discharged until he had made that subject perfectly clear to those whom he taught. By the same reason, therefore, we are bound to a corresponding duty. He placed the truth beyond all doubt. We are bound to place that truth beyond all neglect. For let it be ever remembered that an affirmation, however strong in proof, if never made a subject of reflection, will have no more effect upon the hearts and life, than a thing unknown, or a statement known to be untrue. A resurrection which is neglected, will have no more influence upon the character than a resurrection which is not believed. And when the influence of Christian zeal is thus bereft of all its majesty, the zeal which labours to promote them will be enfeebled and fruitless, because inconsistent and unsustained. A thoughtful estimation of these facts is claimed, therefore, from all the individuals before me, who fall under the term *unconverted*. And I entreat their calm reflection ; whether they have realized a spiritual life which has not yet been brought into consistent personal devotedness, or whether they have realized in themselves no spiritual life at all ? It is for them to consider, and to consider well, that in their present state there is no continuance. Life is hastening onward to its termination, and death, the cold and gloomy end of earthly privilege—though in the madness of unbelief men turn it into levity—will form no safe retreat for human sinfulness. Unbelief, hardened in

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disobedience through life, shall be moved and drawn from its shelter in the grave. They, therefore, that are unconverted, have to prepare not for the wants of life, nor of death which follows it; but for the resurrection, and the judgment, and for its doom! They cannot escape from this, even in the grave. It is this which gives the terrible solemnity to every privilege which is here enjoyed on earth; its consequences must be felt for ever. Mercy leaves you not the privilege of brutes, to eat, and drink, and labour, and laugh, and die, and so to escape from all responsibility. No! The trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised. "I saw the dead both small and great, stand before God, and the books were opened, and another book was opened, which is the Book of Life, and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the book according to their deeds."

But further, a faithful consideration of these facts is required of all decided Christians. It is not enough that they be *believed*—they require to be *laid upon the heart*, they have to be brought home with practical earnestness to the details of present life. Each sorrow which we now endure must be solaced by the hope which it awakens, and every trial must thus be sanctified, if ever it be sanctified at all. Death alone will neither elucidate nor soften the bitterness of our earthly existence; our thoughts and feelings must go beyond the grave; they must reach the resurrection and judgment, and the final reward. It is there, and in these events that the light afflictions which are but for a moment, shall work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. We must therefore have our thoughts rest upon the things which are unseen, and which are eternal; thus, brethren, temptation will lose its power; grief will be separated from its anguish, thus spiritual labour will become a delight, and Christian zeal, prompt every department of its action, when it is thus cherished by the influence which eternity supplies and is studied in the light of the final resurrection.

The more these facts are individualized in our meditation the more will the advantage of their declaration be attained. It is not that the resurrection is believed in by the world which so much concerns the Christian, he is solemnized by the fact that this resurrection is made certain to himself. Man begins, to feel when he has changed the formulary of his thoughts from the general to the particular, that the statement, "The dead shall rise again," affects not the heart so much as the more limited and yet more personal statement, "I must rise again." This also becomes more affecting when it is brought home to particular relations, allowances and moral attitudes, realized in their present state and their earthly engagements. Contracted within the narrow limits of their own observation they endeavour from incident to incident, to estimate the importance and character of a whole life by views which have been formed from their isolating selfishness, and the feelings of evanescence which is produced by incessant change; but when brought into combination with the facts before us, individual existence is revealed in a moral relation to him who rules infinity, and the doom which he will pronounce must give a fixedness to the condition and habit in which his judgment is passed. Each man, therefore, ought to consider as he passes through this mortal life, not only whether he can venture the present consequences of present acts, but also whether he could dare to be fixed in that condition for ever. The relationships of life must all be raised again. They must stand again face to face in judgment. Human opinions, whether flattering or condemnatory, will be overruled or blown away by the decision of unerring and unchanging righteousness. What that judgment will inflict is not to be considered—that is not the question now. It is enough for us to consider that we must all appear before the judgment-seat, and each man as he appears must be fixed and doomed for ever. If sincere, he will be placed beyond corruption, but if a hypocrite he will be driven beyond reform or penitence. Like corpses that have frozen suddenly on the battle field, each one will have his passion, each the habit in which he died crystallized in his own frame, and its expression will be registered in his own lineaments. If this certain reality could be brought to operate in the details of life, its character would be totally changed; because all the calculations on which it would be based must receive the element and alter to their basis. The hypocrite, therefore, should consider whether he could venture to be fixed in his hypocrisy for ever! Crystallized in the looseness of his present state, the worldly man—the man of pleasure, the dissipated, the licentious, the blas-

phemer, the false, the incipient murderer, and the murderer in fact, will then be made to live in the apprehension, not of death, which will end their present gratification merely, but also of the resurrection which will make their guilty defilement to be as lasting as existence! With this awful feature, in the case before us, every relation which calls forth religious activity demands to be viewed. The present subject asks to be considered as one which must retain its character in the presence of God, and in the experience of eternity. All the objects of a Christian's religious commiseration must meet him again, and his zeal must be appreciated by minds who see what effects are included in salvation and the second death. On either supposition, whether these objects be saved or lost, it is dreadful to feel that the moral association here involves an association with them for ever. It is still very fearful to think that at any given time, by one act of divine sovereignty, over which we have no control, in ending the period of our mortal life, the character of the everlasting association may be fixed beyond all change either by repentance or zeal, for ever. Under such apprehension we may well be urged to "work while it is called to-day;" under such a view of the resurrection and of the judgment to come the Apostle Paul seemed to tremble at the sense of his own responsibility, and he said, "therefore we labour that whether present or absent we may be accepted of him." Dear brethren, under such an aspect of futurity, how unspeakably important to us becomes that "blood of Christ which cleanseth from all sin." Were this withholden from our use, who could dare to stand in judgment with the searcher of hearts; I say not for the crimes, but rather for the most devoted service on earth. Our prayers deserve not his attention; our labours are as nothing in his sight; our sympathies, whether they succeed or fail, are not worthy of his regard; even our faith and its strongest exercise are dishonouring to his righteousness; but he who "loved us and gave himself for us" can render us accepted in the righteousness of himself. The altar at which we serve "sanctifieth both the giver and the gift." By that grace on which we lean for safety and acceptance we also may expect comfort in success; found to be faithful the labour will exalt the righteousness of him we serve, and therefore it cannot be in vain. When conformed to his will and purposes they shall prosper in the things whereunto he sent them, and therefore they never can be in vain. When they have produced repentance, regeneration, conversion, justification, and holiness in man, the labour of Christian zeal will be found contending with effects which it were better not to have lived at all than to have lived and not enjoyed. In every sinner turned from the error of his way a soul will be saved from death, which is not "labour in vain."

In these statements we advance beyond all speculation. The result is a blessing to be partially experienced here, and therefore we know that our labour is not in vain in the Lord." This may sustain our spirits in our toil, give depth to our deliberation, and velocity to our zeal; but what shall be revealed hereafter. What self-sweetness of intercourse between the labourers and those who have repented by their means. What unearthly joy shall fill the spirit when he who died for man shall say, "Well done good and faithful servant," words are now unable to explain! But this is made clear. It is said, it is written—"then they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever."

One individualizing thought presses still upon my mind. Many of you are present in consequence of that which forms the spectacle of our time. This service has been appointed to meet you in this pursuit. It will not therefore be improper to remind you that whatever the works of human art may be, there is yet one other work which stands before you with a higher claim to admiration, and on higher grounds. It asks your love first to realize, and then to reproduce it: because it never can be in vain. "The cloud capped towers, and Crystal Palaces; yea, the great globe itself, with all that it inherits shall dissolve, and, like the baseless fabric of a vision, leave not a wreck behind;"—did I say, "not a wreck?" I mean nothing save a wreck!—for the earth and the fashion of it passeth away, but our labour in the Lord shall stand, it shall never be in vain; its products shall remain in safety, and be perfected after the final conflagration. "Therefore, beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."

THE TRUTH AS IT IS IN JESUS.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY EVENING, AUGUST 24, 1851,
BY THE REV. J. BALDWIN BROWN,
AT EXETER HALL.

"As the truth is in Jesus."—Ephesians iv. 21.

I BELIEVE that the question which the world is now asking of its wise ones is, whether there is any truth which is not in Jesus, as its ultimate foundation and guarantee. When Paul wrote, an orb, new to man, had risen amidst the starry constellation of earth's great ones. A new truth, the grandeur of whose orbit only such rare men as Paul could estimate, was looming in the eastern horizon of the world. Ages fleeted swiftly as that orb was rising to its zenith, and now it fills the whole heaven with its splendour, and casts the shadow of its supremacy upon the lustre of all rival stars. We look back upon the history of eighteen centuries, and see, how Jesus, once unknown on earth, has calmly, but mightily, widened the sphere of his dominion, till the world begins to recognize him as the centre from which all power physical and spiritual emanates, and his truth the touchstone by which all that shews itself as truth is to be tried. The world of intellect is hastening to the settlement of the question : is there, or is there not, a living Being in the centre of the great system of nature, whose living power is the might of its laws, whose living breath is the spirit of its life. Shallow philosophers tell us that they see no evidence that there is such a living Lord of the creation ; that all can be accounted for by the methodical working of what they call laws of the universe, that the researches of science show to us a vast system of organization, which is self-generating and self-supporting—they do not believe that creation has a living Lord. Deeper thinkers tell us more truly that things cannot be accounted for by excluding the Lord from his creation. The researches of philosophers into that subtle, universal, magnetic force which pervades the universe, prove indisputably the truth which Paul develops in his writings, but which the world has taken ages to spell out for itself, that he, by whom all things were called into being, must be living and working in the midst of all things still, that because he is living at this moment, the pulse of the creation is beating, that because he wills it at this moment, the laws of the creation are sure. From the position to which science itself, which seem to deal with mere laws, is rapidly advancing, it is but one step to the conviction, "This living Lord, this ever-living law Maker of creation, this ever-flowing Fountain of its life, is Christ." The man Christ Jesus, the author of that spiritual truth which the apostle distinguishes as "the truth as it is in Jesus"—is the author of the system of universal nature, and is still the life of every motion, the surety of every law. Of him the heavens are telling as they fulfil their glorious ministry, and hastening not, resting not, shed quickening sunlight and dewy moonlight on the world. Of him the birds are singing as at early prime they soar to bathe their breasts in the flush of morning's splendour, and make the purpling atmosphere resonant with the thrilling melody of their joy; of him the hills and the valleys are whispering, when they are clothed with white flocks as with snow flakes, or stand thick with rustling corn; the storm and the pestilence proclaim him with a voice of terror, as they speed on their desolating, but purifying pathway; the soft west wind breathes his name, when it brings up the treasure of waters from the ocean to refresh and fertilize the world. Because he, Jesus, is living and reigning there, nature fulfills her wonted courses, and life is possible for man. Said we not truly—"There is no truth, which is not in Jesus," as its ultimate foundation and guarantee. Truth of science, society, nature, art, is truth, because he makes it truth, and lives to maintain it, and that highest manifestation of himself which Paul names specially, "the truth as it is in Jesus," is the most precious benefaction of that

being, who supplies momently the beating pulses of our life, and breaks for us our daily bread. I believe that grievous mischief has happened in the church through withholding this truth from the prominence it deserves. Men have got a way of thinking and speaking about the truths of religion, as though there was a specialty and strangeness about them which attaches not to other truths, as though they were very fit for the attention and belief of the saints, but not at all needful for the comfort and well being of the world. I would that men would listen to the proclamation, that this Jesus, of whom we preach to them, is the Being on whom the world, each moment, depends for its order, for its very existence, and themselves for very bread; and that when he says—“*Ye must be born again*”—“*ye must put off the old man, and put on the new*,” he means it—he means that it is the necessary condition of the life of your being, as solemnly and stringently as when he says, “*ye must plough that ye may sow, ye must sow that ye may reap, ye must eat bread that ye may live*.” If you are not to live and die like the brutes that perish, to receive “the truth as it is in Jesus,” is matter of simple and sheer necessity. The sentence which more than any other expresses the ordinance of “the truth as it is in Jesus”—“*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved*,” is echoed to us from all the regions of creation, and sealed to us by all the ordinances of life. In treating so large a subject in so small a space, much must be taken for granted between speaker and hearer. Two courses are open—either to describe the truth, or examine its importance and applications. I choose the last. You know the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ—“*How God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that the world might not perish*.” “*That whoso hath the Son, hath life; whoso hath not the Son, hath not life, but the wrath of God abideth on him*.” St. Paul, in Romans v. 1—12, gives the most complete account of the creed of the Christian church. After some preliminary remarks upon the certainty of its principles, I shall dwell upon the adaptation of the “truth as it is in Jesus” to man and man’s great need of this truth; regarding man.

- I. As an individual, spiritual being.
- II. As a being of society, development, history.
- III. As training, as he is, or ought to be, for an eternal citizenship of a kingdom of everlasting glory.

I said that I should premise some words with regard to the certainty of the principles of “the truth as it is in Jesus.” I believe that some men think that while there is a strict necessity about all the ordinances of nature, there is something arbitrary, uncertain, which may be altered or repealed about the spiritual truths of redemption. I tell you, brethren, that were God to repeal and annul all the ordinances of creation, and lay the universe in ruins, still sure and fixed, for ever, would be the word which he has spoken in his Son. It springs from a deeper depth of his Being than all the ordinances of creation, and were they shaken, would survive their wreck. I wish you to consider how calmly, coldly, absolute, are all his ordinances, how he has marked out our way, from which he suffers no hair-breadth of deviation, to every true end. From the lowest thing to the highest reigns the same calm serenity of law. The grain of dust which is borne before the breeze has its path marked out with unerring certainty, it could not waver one span from the path which mechanical laws prescribe to it, or it would violate the order of worlds. The plant demands conditions precisely adapted to its organism, or no art will make it grow. Man, in his life, must study and observe with nicest accuracy the ordinances of nature, to repeal, suspend, or amend them is beyond his power—he must sleep to rest himself, he must eat bread to grow. No cunning contrivance on his part can make work refreshment, or poison food. In his works again to know and do the law is his chief consideration. His walls must have certain conditions of strength and position, if they are to stand upright. He must ask nature for her colours, and search nature for her models if he would be a creator in the worlds of art. So fixed and stern are these ordinances, that man dreams not of resisting them. God has one way to every end. Man must master that way, and he can work and walk like a God. And has God, who has made thus but one way to every end on earth, made for his children a double or a devious path to heaven? Has God, in mercy to man, that he may know how to walk, shut him up to such simple and severe

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conditions, in matters where mistake may be rectified and loss repaired, and is it left dim and doubtful how he is to travel in a path in which to stumble, is to imperil a soul's salvation, and to fall is to die an eternal death? Or is God mocking you, when he says, "Behold the Lamb of God." "Believe, and I live." "Whoso hath the Son, hath life." Was there not a terrible and stern necessity that only thus could sin be pardoned and man be saved, ere that precious blood was poured on Calvary, or that cry was wrung from the most loving, trustful, hoping heart that ever beat in human bosom, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Solemn as are the ordinances of the creation which make their ceaseless melody around us—here are ordinances of solemnity unutterably deeper, for their issues are life eternal and eternal death. Oh, my brethren, would that I had words or tones to utter the depth of my conviction, that to the spirit within each of you, "the truth as it is in Jesus," is precious as to body is nightly slumber, and needful as daily bread. Having glanced thus at the certainty of its principles, I proceed now to dwell upon the breadth and universality of its applications; in other words, the special fitness of "the truth as it is in Jesus," in comparison with all other truths, half truths, or pretended truths, to supply the whole spiritual need of man.

I. Man as an individual, spiritual being, whose life, mysterious, and mighty word, is pregnant with such teeming consequences, and carries such tremendous results.

I have used already the expression, man's spiritual need. We must come to civilized, educated, aye, Christian countries, to hear men dare affirm, before the God that made them, and the universe which confutes them, that man has no spiritual need. Everywhere where the instinct of nature is not corrupted by education, we find dominant, *in some shape or other*, the religious idea. Some subtle, anti-Christian philosophers, recognizing this, adopt another tone. Let the religious faculty alone, they say, and it will supply itself—what need of your Bible, your preaching, your "truth as it is in Jesus?" Man is a religious being. Let his religious faculty alone, and as the eye feeds itself with light, it will worship and adore. And who gave the light to the seeing faculty? Who, but he who gave Jesus to the religious faculty the soul? No more can man's religious faculty supply itself without Jesus, than can the eye see without the light, the body feed itself without bread, or the heart live without a friend. There may be those here in a Christian land, who are trying to live and to die, without a thought of God, without a desire for his favour, a hope of his heaven, burrowing like the earth-worms, or grovelling like the brutes. But there is not a poor idolater who lacerates his quivering flesh, or pours out night-long wailings before the senseless idol of his God, who does not pour shame upon you; there is not a dull and besotted savage who picks up a stone, and prays to it as a God, who will not rise up to confound you. The groans, the tears, the blood, the rich hecatomb of life, which idol worship has cost the world, is a fearful witness, that whatever you may think of it, man must spend, and be-spent in seeking restoration of his divine relation, or die miserably an eternal death—and that some truth from God must come to him for his guidance, some clear light from heaven, shining into the dark places of his heart, or he will infallibly, unman, degrade, destroy himself in his misdirected quest of that which he knows that he must have or perish. That "the truth as it is in Jesus," is the only truth which can meet his religious need, and educate his religious faculty. Some few considerations may help to shew—

I. "The truth as it is in Jesus" is neither a philosophy nor a ritual—it neither mocks man's spirit with forms of thought which can occupy the intellect alone, nor deludes his conscience with ceremonial observances which are realities only to the flesh. It tells a tale of a life of human virtue, lived by a man in this world—of words spoken, deeds done, sufferings borne, and triumphs achieved by God's incarnate Son, which at once inform the understanding, stimulate the conscience, and vitalize the affections of the heart. Judaism and Paganism were sick of their rituals, stained with the blood of victims, not seldom with the blood of souls; Greece was sick of its philosophy when Jesus came. With aching heart the world was waiting for one who should speak to that heart, and say to it by God's commission "Peace, be still." Jesus said, "look unto me and live," and hope revived. the world

arose from the dead ; and when the sinner weary of philosophizing about religion, when he wants the thing, weary of sacrificing, when he wants the victim, looks to Jesus, reads the story of his life, "his agony and bloody sweat, his cross and passion;" here he cries, is life—words no more, works no more, here is life ; is a life such as I in my misery and poverty have dreamed of, lived by a man on this very ground I tread. It is lived for me. God has written the tale of it for me. Jesus, a man I can look to, believe in, and love, calls me to live after him ; he who lived above Satan's trammels and sin's temptations, calls me to live above them, and promises to make me free with the Godlike liberty himself enjoys. Because of the life that is here breathing from "the truth as it is in Jesus," I will follow him, perchance through him I shall realize my idea.

2. The gift which "the truth as it is in Jesus" offers to bestow is, the gift which all men are needing, though they know it not, the living God. "*Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word which cometh out of the mouth of God.*" You have been trying—with what success ? Is it well ? My brother, is it well ? No heartache ? No weariness of life ? No remorse ? No shrinking from death ? No dread of hell ? Is it all joy, peace, hope, triumph ? Ah ! which of us dares to say so ? But is it becoming so ? Answer me but one question and I will tell you. Is God daily better known and better loved ? God has so made the meanest of us, that the universe without himself would not content us. He, though the universe perish is all in all. The restless cry of roaming hearts that burdens ever the air of heaven, "*Who will show us any good?*" The terrible outlets for pent up spiritual energy which man, not knowing how to spend it upon God, will frantically open for himself, the sickening frustration of his every hope, or that worse heart-aching for something still beyond which gnaws his spirit when all his sensual and worldly hopes are gained, are God's witnesses even in sinners hearts, that the soul is for God, and God for the soul, and that worlds cannot supply his loss. Let me know God ; let me set my foot upon the rock of his promises ; let my soul be satisfied with his lovingkindness is the true cry of man's heart, and I can safely bid earth and hell defiance ; but take away my God from me, let his face be hid, and what surely have I of a single possession, what earnest of a single hope ? That is the religion which will bear its own evidence to my heart, which can tell me most, can give me most, of God ; and here in Christ I learn to know him, in Christ he bestows himself freely on my soul. "*The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth. And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace. For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.*" This revelation is full of God. It is all a delusion, a mockery, and a snare, if it does not make known to sinners the secret mind and loving heart of God. The life of Christ, his sufferings, and death, all turn and hinge on the truth, that "*God was in him, reconciling the world unto himself.*" That is the religion which gives to man, through the mercies of redemption, as his portion the living God.

3. The only power recognized by "the truth as it is in Jesus," the agent of its operations, and the instrument of its sway, is the holy, ennobling sanctifying principle of love. False religions are fruitful of fear. No religion is fruitful of despair. Christ's religion is fruitful of love. Love is that agent in the world of spirit, which corresponds to that subtle principle called affinity in the world of matter, which binds elements together in bonds indissoluble, which assimilates elements to kindred elements, and is the active principle of all organic life. Love in the world of intelligent beings blends spirits, as magnetism blends atoms. It is the universal agent, in elevating or degrading the being. The love of God is life, the love of the world is death. To love a being on earth is insensibly to grow like him ; to love God is to grow like HIM ; liker, liker, more blessed, more beautiful, more glorious, forevermore. If you would search into the secrets of a man's life, search into the things which he loves. And I say, that that religion bears the stamp of truth upon its forehead, visible to every human soul, which can quicken in that soul a love to the living God, which can make it laugh at losses, exult

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in torments, and leap with bounding joy to the arms of its loved one from the rack of writhing agony, or through the ice cold glooms of death. Never did religion come to man with such seals upon its front—life, joy, peace, reconciliation, God as its portion, love as its power. These are the seals of “the truth as it is in Jesus,” and make it needful to each soul of man as to the body is nightly slumber and daily bread. We have hitherto looked at man as a single isolated being, having needs which none can supply, responsibilities which none can share, a soul which none can save but God.

II. We have now to regard man as a being of society, development, history; and ask what peculiar application the religion of Jesus is capable of, to man as a social being, undergoing an education which lasts through ages, and the wants which thence may spring. I say, man is a being of society, development, history; there is an infancy, childhood, manhood of the human race; man has grown steadily in his understanding of his relation to God, and to his fellows. Can we trace any growth in the development of the Divine religion, which lead us to the conclusion, that it comes to us from the same hand which is leading on the progress of the world.

1. “The truth as it is in Jesus” has attended most closely the growth of humanity; has enlarged age by age the circle of its revelation, in correspondence with man’s enlarging intelligence, has spoken as a nurse to the infancy, as a parent to the childhood, as a teacher to the boyhood, as a brother to the manhood of the world. “The truth as it is in Jesus,” in its fulness, has come to us as the climax of a series of revelations, in each of which Jesus was progressively unfolding himself to mankind. Softly bloomed the Eden around the infant giant, and God’s footsteps walking in the garden, (as children still love to fancy,) was his proclamation to the infant world. In simple and grand relations, as the companion and friend of his pilgrims, he revealed himself to the patriarchs. When the family relationship in the tent of Abraham began to assume distinct importance, Christ appeared to legislate for that relationship, and to show himself the God of all the families of man. He made Abraham’s family the model family of the world. Soon the family grew into a nation; a true nation, having common blood, traditions, laws. Christ appeared to legislate for that nation; established a national divine service, and in the social life of that nation for which he legislated, gave the model of the social life of the world. Soon the nation enlarged to a universal society in the Roman empire, comprehending all nations, establishing common laws, customs, and rights among mankind. This was the rudiment of the highest and most permanent form of human society, a confederation of nations, and straightway now that the world was fully grown, Christ appeared to supply the substance of an universal gospel, to send forth a Paul to be its universal preacher, and to lay the foundation of an universal church. “The truth as it is in Jesus” comes to us hoary with the snows of ages, in which it has toiled, travailed, suffered for, and guided man. With everything which has been most prominent in human history it has most closely associated itself; wherever the world’s heart has been most warmly beating, it has dwelt by choice. Once Jerusalem was the centre of activity, and then Jerusalem was its home; gradually the tide of human activity and interest set westwards; Asia yielded to Europe the sceptre of civilization, and Rome became the centre of government and fountain of law, and in Rome for ages dwelt the living power of the church. Westwards still, and northwards, through the middle ages, the current of civilization was flowing, and now England, the centre of the world’s activity is the theatre of the activity of the church. Looking on these things, what dare we say, but that “the truth as it is in Jesus” came forth from the same being who is the guide of human progress, and has influences as mighty and important for man’s social life as it has for the individual human soul.

2. We have seen how Christianity has attended the march of civilized man in all ages. We have regarded the growth of humanity in the line of historic development, guarded and consecrated by the church. Alas! we dare not forget that the great mass of the human family lie out of the line of human development, possessed of a very dim and faint civilization, and in some cases utterly undeveloped and uncivilized, living a life studiously, we might almost say assimilated to the brutes. And the question rises before us and demands settlement; is Christianity alone the religion of cultivated and civilized hu-

manity, or is it the religion of the whole human race? Can it do anything for paganism at all analogous to that which it has done and is doing for Christendom; is there anything in the condition and expectation of Pagan nations, which brings home to us the conviction that they are waiting for the gospel. Brethren, the world is *waiting* for its deliverer, and that deliverer is Christ. I can only mention in rapid outline some of the principles, the consideration of which may help us to this conclusion. It is with me a fundamental principle that some portion of truth lies at the bottom of all idolatries. And it is just the original portion of truth which was in them, and not the impurities and obscenities with which priests have overlaid it, which at this moment constitutes their strength. Do not let any one persuade you that man universally at the bottom of his heart prefers a lie to the truth. Every falsehood current among men, must have some portion of truth mixed up with it, or it will never circulate, the liker it is to truth the more widely it travels, and the more deadly it becomes. Now thus is it with all the false religions of the world. When man forsook his Maker, and began his wanderings in the wilderness, truth like the fabled body of Osiris was broken into fragments. Each nation bore its fragment into its distant wanderings, and has erred fatally in making that fragment do duty for the whole. If you look into it, you will find that each nation has a distinct and different conception of the Divine Being and attributes. Each has taken one attribute of his nature, and worships it as the whole. Thus truth lies scattered about the earth in fragments, what the world wants is a religion, which shall, Isis like, gather up these scattered fragments, and present them to the world as a living whole. Now, I say fearlessly, that "the truth as it is in Jesus" alone stands in the centre of these fragments, and alone can bring each one into living harmony with the rest. Jesus is light, intelligence, power, will, in one, he is the substance of every idea of truth which has ever floated through the brains of the poets and sages, who in earliest ages were the religious teachers of the world; while in him all Divine attributes are blend in exquisite harmony, and veiled with the softest tenderness, that the God beneath the sense whose justice the whole world of heathendom is cowering, may no longer be feared or hated, but served and beloved by man. Look into the sacred books of any Pagan nation which has such books, and you will find that man is not and never has been at rest in his degradation, misery, and sin; they all teem with memories of the past, more holy and happy than the present,—and with prophecies of a future more blissful and glorious still. They all tell us tales of heroic champions of virtue and goodness, which, baseless as they may be, show to us in every age the direction of man's deepest thoughts. Every nation has its chosen hero, its tutelar deity, or its patron saint, whose sufferings are fabled to have purchased its liberty, and in some cases whose death has been the price of its life; and all the memories of the past golden age, the dreams of a lost Eden which still haunt the human brain, expand in all Vedas, Sagas, and Korans, into prophecies of a glorious state of purity and blessedness into which, though heathendom knows not how, man is to be brought. He then who would be the world's deliverer, must confirm these memories, fulfil these prophecies, substantiate these dreams. Here is the high supremacy of the "truth as it is in Jesus." We who hold this book can tell man, the Mogul, the Hindoo, the Chinese, the Mahometan, and the Norseman, of an Eden fairer than his memories paint it, of a deliverer more strong than his most daring conceptions, of a heaven brighter than his most kindling dreams. All that man has been dimly and tearfully seeking, Jesus supplies to him freely out of the exhaustless storehouse of heaven. This book tells us of a hero more bright than Krishna, more benign and enduring than Prometheus, more radiant than Phœbus with his conquering bow, more terrible than Odin with his trenchant sword. All that is highest in the instinct of uncivilized and unchristianized humanity flies to him as its loadstar, all that is lowest frowns on him as its conqueror and judge; while he can at once plant in the bosom of the most degraded and brutish communities those principles of Divine light and those powers of Divine love which have civilized and educated Christendom, and open before the poorest savage the most corrupt and holpeless idolater, the picture of a scene in which "*Many shall come from the east and the west, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of our God.*" From heathendom and from Christendom alike his trophies

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are gathered ; from the need of Paganism, and from the fulness of Christendom "the truth as it is in Jesus" has its seals.

3. If you think you will find that "the truth as it is in Jesus" alone can supply to social life that nexus, that bond, for which it has been ever striving, brotherly love.

Man is intended to prepare himself by the right knowledge and discharge of the duties of social life on earth, for the social life of heaven. Man has an instinct which prompts him ever to seek the improvement of society. It is utterly false to say that war is the natural instinct of man. Society is his instinct, and the deepest yearning of his heart is for love. There has been a constant progress for ages in the recognition of human rights and the discharge of mutual duties. This is the true progress of society. But man pants for swifter progress, for a purer and happier social state than any which has yet been achieved. Each year brings to light some new scheme for the amelioration of mankind. Cry, "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity," if you would catch men. What mean these convulsive throes that rend European society, this tottering of thrones, this travail of states, but that men, through strong long-slumbering instincts, now will not live as mere gregarious beasts or sullen foes, but will have or try to have heartier sympathy, more cordial fellowship between nation and nation, class and class, man and man. Alas ! they know not that they are truly toiling, panting, praying, and some are daring to blaspheme for the full establishment on earth of the principle of the church of Jesus, love. There is a perpetual conflict in society between two principles, individual independence and social obligation. "Let every one bear his own burden," one party are crying ; let every one leave his own burden and bear his brother's, is the socialists response. The two principles are at war in society. Christ recognizes and harmonizes both. He deepens the sense of individual independence, by the solemnity of the relations which he establishes between a man and his Maker ; while he deepens the sense of the claim of the human brotherhood, by making every man a brother not after the flesh only but after the Spirit. Every principle of social life which is precious, for which Europe has for twenty centuries been toiling, bedewing with tears her bosom, and nourishing her soil in the blood of her sons, is held out to us by "the truth as it is in Jesus." His church is the model of society. Because society is not after this model it groans and strives "Whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?" They who had all things in common in the little upper chamber in Jerusalem had conquered that lust of possession which rends society and devastates the world, and when on earth, in love, "God's kingdom is come, and God's will is done on earth as in heaven," to which blessed consummation "the truth as it is in Jesus" points, and the church leads the way ; then shall the demon that rends and convulses society be for ever exorcised, and humanity clothed and in her right mind, sitting at the feet of Jesus, shall receive at his hand the fruit of her ages of suffering, battle, and pilgrimage, and crown with a wreath more radiant than all the crowns of the creation, the brows of him whom once when he came on his mission of mercy, she cast scornfully out of her bosom to die.

I say, looking at society and its growth and destiny, if your heart beats with the desire of serving your generation, give yoself heart and soul to the living and spreading of "*the truth as it is in Jesus.*"

III. We glance at the application of "the truth as it is in Jesus," to man as a nascent citizen of a state of eternal glory.

Life stretches its warm mantle around us. If it is lifted for a moment we shudder at the ice-cold breath of death. Around this world, lit by the sunlight, there stretches an unknown, unmeasured abyss of worlds. Death is a gate—no man believe it to be the end. But whither? Sense knows not, thought knows not ;—it is from mystery to mystery. The unknown region, outlying life, darkens us like a shadow ; deadens us like a pall. To that gate each child of man is thronging—through it generations vanish—none returns. Take your cold philosophies to be your load-stars of life. You must leave them at that gate for ever. We know that beyond are worlds, teeming, thrilling with life ; worlds of glory, where truths that dimly twinkle in earth's dull atmosphere, flash out like planets, and principles which here are

waging all but hopeless conflict with the tide of evil, have free and glorious course through blessed and beautiful worlds. We know that beyond an everlasting kingdom. The modes of its action, the forms of its life we know not ; the keenest and most searching glances give to us no sight of it ; the most daring speculation gives to us no outline of its life. But blessed be God, we know one thing, we know that Jesus is its king. We know that the Lamb who has been slain occupies its throne of translucent splendour, and that the truth of his redemptive mission, "*the truth as it is in Jesus*," is the very essence of its law. To man straining his glance to see some fore-shining of the things that shall be hereafter, the vision of the Revelation is given. The most remarkable passage, presenting the central figure, the essential principle of the book I will read—" *And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth.*" HE, the principles of whose truth we have been vindicating, reigns as King in the future and eternal world. Into that world he has borne the person of the Divine humanity, and in the very form of the Christian sacrifice he is reigning on its throne. No new lessons need we learn who are nurslings of his church. When we rise to that heavenly citizenship—dark as are its details, and unknown its forms, yea, though helpless as an infant on the nurse's bosom, lie in the lap of death the nurslings of immortality, as full-grown men, educated and accomplished citizens, the disciples of "*the truth as it is in Jesus*," shall enter there. Love, such love as accomplished the work of redemption, shall be the ruling principle of all worlds. "The Lamb shall reign for ever. This is the burden of prophecy with which the book of Revelation is teeming. It is a Divine hymn in celebration of the Lordly supremacy of love. Through ages, in THE CHURCH, that prophecy has been silently accomplishing, on the page of history, through the triumph of "*the truth as it is in Jesus*;" already its record may be read ; already earth is brightening with the glow of that glorious dawning—and hark, over the eastern hills that are flushing with the nascent splendour, there steals the breath of angels' music, and thus they sing—" *The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our God and of his Christ. Hallelujah, hallelujah, the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth.*" Will you take part in that blissful celebration ? Will you hail the advent of that kingdom, and sit down upon its throne ? "*The truth as it is in Jesus*," alone can furnish you the charter, the blood-bought robe of righteousness, the festal garment, and the Spirit's conquering force the palm and the wreath of victory. Learn, that "*the truth as it is in Jesus*," is the truth which shall reign for ever. Choose ye—whether ye will attend its progress with jubilant triumph, or be crushed beneath its advancing chariot wheels to everlasting death. This truth, which we clasp to our hearts, and fired by love, would bear to earth's remotest regions, if true is true for ever. What lies before us in that future and eternal state, that citizenship of glory, to which we are born in Christ, "*Eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive ;*" but this truth which is our pole-star through the glooms of night, will be our sun in the noon of heaven. The process of the ages will but confirm and illustrate it, all that God does will but unfold and apply it. Its children must lead the very van of progress through the spaces of the ages which as yet are undeveloped by God. This rock of ages will never tremble nor quiver, though the abyss yawn dark and deep around it ; and when at last, the heavens shall be shaken, and the stars drop out like untimely fruit from their spheres, the children of this truth shall still look down from some starry height for aye unshaken, and sing the birth song of new worlds. All that God will be, all that God will do, through those ages of ages, that are yet in the womb of night ; all riches that he will gather ; all splendours that he will shower, like a baptism of glory, on yet unborn worlds—all, all, will be the inheritance of the man who, by grace, has been brought to the acknowledgment of "*the truth as it is in Jesus*."

DIVINE WORKMANSHIP.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, AUGUST 31, 1851,

BY THE REV. J. BEAUMONT, M.D.

AT EXETER HALL.

"For thou, Lord, hast made me glad through thy works: I will triumph in the work of thy hands."—Psalm xcii. 4.

Is these soul-breathing productions of the man after God's own heart, what a richness, fulness, powerfulness, we find! So much so that the sweet singer of Israel shall be the singer for us; and when we want apt words for apt places, choice sentences for choice sentiments, we will cull them from this inimitable legend, the Psalter of David. The whole of the Psalms, perhaps, may be said to be capable of being thrown into the three following general classes. There is a portion of them that contains the experience of the piety of the Psalmist; and, although given out for the service of the Jew under the law, yet it is not a whit less adapted to the service of the Christian under the gospel. The most finished Christian may find in the Psalms expressions to sustain his utmost flights of devotion, his profoundest sentiments of reverence, his highest soarings of faith, and his richest expansions of hope. There is another part of the Psalms which consists of what I take leave to call maxims or proverbs, analogous to the Proverbs of Solomon, containing "wise saws and instances," gems of moral, social, and political wisdom, ingots of intellectual gold valuable for the conduct of the affairs of life. Then there is another part of the Psalms which consists of hymns, or odes, or songs, of a directly prophetical character, in which the harp of David is eloquent, and discourses beforehand in sweet and touching music on the person, the mission, the sufferings, the shame, the scandal, the death, the burial, the resurrection, and the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Psalm from which I have taken the text belongs to the first class: it contains utterances of piety; and there is no Psalm more suited to the Sabbath-day than this. "It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord, to sing praises unto thy name, O Most High." Then the Psalmist mentions the subjects of thought and meditation, and the periods of time most appropriate to each subject: "To show forth thy loving-kindness in the morning, and thy faithfulness every night." And then he calls upon all the varied instruments of music in use in that day to aid him in giving expression to his emotion: "Upon an instrument of ten strings, and upon the psaltery, and upon the harp, with a solemn sound. For [here is the text] thou, Lord, hast made me glad through thy work; I will triumph in the work of thy hands."

Men and brethren, fellow-countrymen, and fellow-Christians, you have many of you come up from the provinces to behold the works of man, the products of his genius, the results of his skill, the fruits of his industry, the memorials of his inventive and industrial energy; and as you have walked about the vast assemblage of the products of man's power, poetry, labour, and assiduity, you have wondered and admired. Now I crave you

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to turn aside and behold the works of the Lord. "For thou, Lord, hast made me glad through thy works ; I will triumph in the work of thy hands." We will turn for a moment to the work itself—the work of the Lord—and, secondly, to some of the reasons or grounds on which a contemplation of that work is eminently fitted to inspire the breasts of good men with sentiments of peculiar gladness and joy. And while I speak to the outward ear, may God speak to the heart ! Consider what I say ; and may the Lord give you understanding in these things.

I. First, let us turn to the work of the Lord : "Thou, Lord, hast made me glad through thy work ; I will triumph in the work of thy hands." All the works of God with which, as yet, we have any acquaintance, are his works of creation, of providence, and of grace. Creation is his work—he made the heavens and the earth—he made the earth out of nothing, hung it on nothing, flattened the poles, drew out the equator, scooped the valley, sloped the hill : he did it ; he did it. He spake, and it was done ; he commanded, and it stood fast. The rearing of the vast visible frame-work of the universe, the giving it form, and symmetry, and motion, so that of that motion there comes the regular return of day and night, winter and summer, seed time and harvest—these are the works of God. Providence, too, is his work. The rise and fall of individuals, the rise and fall of families, the rise and fall of nations, the rise and fall of the visible frame-work and platform of churches—these things are the doing of the Lord. In providence he keeps back the face of his throne. His providence is in yonder whirlwind ; his providential footsteps are past our finding out. He sits behind a visible screen-work of secondary causes, presides over all the movements of the universe, touches the springs that regulate them with the same ease with which the musician touches the strings of his instrument, hardly knowing that he touches them at all, and yet fetches the music out, draws the melody forth. "The Lord reigneth ; let the earth rejoice ; let the multitude of the isles thereof be glad." But, my brethren, it is the object of the Scriptures to instruct us in a higher order of work either than that of creation or providence. Hence we say, we feel :—

"Twas great to form the earth from naught,
—Twas greater to redeem."

The imparting of divine truth to the mind of man, the conveyance of that truth to man's intellect, the clearing of the intellect from error, the purging it of prejudice, the removal of the mildew, the blight, the blast which had befallen that intellect, the purging it, the clarifying it, the getting it filled with truth again—that is the work of God. So is the implantation of divine grace in the heart of man—that grace which at first is such a tiny thing, a little speck. You see the green speck borne on the surface of the soil—what a delicate thing it is ! Of that little vegetable infant just born there soon comes the blade ; but that is frail also, and trails itself on the surface of the soil ; but fed by heaven and nurtured by earth, the blade stands up and becomes a stalk, firm, erect. Nurtured still by the dews of the morning, fed by the springs of earth, fostered by the care of heaven, of that stalk there comes the ear, and at the top of the stalk a number of rows, each row filled with a number of vesicles, little granular bodies, each of these swelling, filling, and swelling again. The summer sun shines out bravely ; and now you have "the full corn in the ear ;" and it bows its head, and asks the reaper to gather it into the garner. Such is the work of grace in the soul of man. The renovation of the heart of man, the renewal of the heart in righteousness, the removal of idolatry, the subversion of superstition, the creation of the beauties of holiness, the recovery of the heart from its vassalage to Satan, the bringing it back in rejoicing homage to God—that is the work of God.

But why is this work so emphatically called his work ? "Thou, Lord, hast made me glad through thy work : I will triumph in the work of thy hands." Why, it is far more dependent on God for its accomplishment, than it is on all other agencies besides. "Paul may plant, and Apollos may water, but it is God that giveth the increase." The work of conversion is in every sense and in

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every case challenged by God himself as his work. The work of addition to the church is God's. Men may add to the church, and sometimes they add hypocrites, sometimes formalists, sometimes infidels, but the Lord adds "such as shall be saved." You may have the most fearless John the Baptist preacher in the land for your preacher; he may deliver to you the elementary truths of Revelation, in "thoughts that breathe and words that burn;" but until influence comes from above, until virtue rushes from the throne on high, there is no conversion. It is when the power comes from above that darkness passes away from the chamber of reason, conscience trembles in her retirement, the citadel of the soul surrenders, the banners of the cross wave in its high places, and the march of the soul to glory begins. This work may emphatically be called the work of the Lord, because it is his chief work, his sublimest work, his grandest achievement. We disparage none of the works of God; they are all great, grand, and glorious. What a work creation is! The angels thought so at any rate. They watched over it during its successive stages; they gazed during the six successive fias of the Almighty Creator; and as they beheld the work rise up under the forming head of God, they wondered, they became excited; when they saw the first blade of grass, the first ray of light, the first drop of water, the first grain of sand, how they marvelled! They had no knowledge of matter till they saw the creation of our world. There is no matter in their nature; there is none in the nature of God. When they saw matter formed, how they wondered! They mused in silent admiration for six days; but when on the sixth day they saw God take a portion of this new substance matter, and unite with it spirit, and form of the union man, and when they saw him cover man over with the image of himself, they could restrain their emotion no longer. Having been silent six days they now burst into a song which I must hear in heaven, which I must learn from themselves, before I can fully understand it. What a work creation is! Look at the green tints of spring, the bright flowers of summer, the rich fruitage of autumn, and then say for one moment whether there are any of the works of man which can be compared with the works of God. When you look sometimes on the work of a great painter, a great poet, a great sculptor, some great artist, you say, "There he is, there he is," meaning by that the *imprimatur* of his master mind, the footmarks of his prodigious genius, the dash and tracery of his wondrous intellect. And when we look on the works of creation, there is God. Marvellous are thy works, O Lord God Almighty. Providence, too, is a sublime work. Look at Tyre. Why, her merchants are princes; her shipping is an immense forest; her population is uncounted. Look again; and instead of its vast multitude, and its shipping, there is nothing but a solitary net, the net of a solitary fisherman, stretched on the top of a naked rock; and instead of the hum of the uncounted multitude, there is nothing heard but the scream of the owl. Who has done this? What has done this? Providence has done it. Look at Assyria. See the flower of her army going out against Israel. They pitch their tents, they lift their lances in the sun; the helmets are nodding in the breeze; their bosoms are beating high with martial fire. Look again next morning: the helmets are not nodding, the lances are not lifted, the bosoms are not beating; the raven-wing of death has flapped over the whole army. In an hour the work was done; in a few minutes it was done; and there is not left a single breathing creature of the whole army. Who has done it? What has done it? Providence has done it. The Lord fought for Israel. But great and sublime as are the works of creation and Providence, the work of redemption is still more sublime. To see the brand of guilt removed from the brow of man—to see the lurking venom taken from the substance of his soul—to see the man who lay on the brink of ruin, smoking, almost singed, for everlasting burning—to see him caught away from ruin, pulled back from perdition—to see him justified, regenerated, sanctified,—to see him walking about with the title deeds in his hand to an everlasting inheritance—to see him now a child of God and an heir of heaven,—that is a sight indeed! That work is the sublimest work of God.

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II. But without detaining you longer on this part of the subject, I now pass on, in the second place, to point out some reasons or grounds on which the contemplation of this work is so eminently fitted to inspire the breasts of good men with sentiments of peculiar gladness. "For thou Lord, hast made me glad through thy work : I will triumph in the work of thy hands."

And here for a moment I will pause at the threshold of this part of our subject, just to notice a popular fallacy on the subject of religion—a popular fallacy to this effect: that though religion is respectable, sacred, venerable, yea, august and heavenly, yet it is not blithe, cheerful, gladsome; that though a respectable thing, it is rather a heavy thing; that though a venerable thing, it is a rather melancholy thing. I call that a fallacy. There is no melancholy in religion. Who are they that say that religion is gloomy? Infidels, profane men. But why should I listen to their testimony about religion? I am not in the habit of listening to the testimony of blind men about the beauties of colour; I am not in the habit of listening to the testimony of deaf men upon the harmonies of sound and variations of melody; and if I do not listen to blind men about colour, or to deaf men about sounds, why should I listen to infidel men about religion? They never tested it; they never experimented the matter. I know Lord Byron does say that man always was, and always will be, "an unlucky rascal"—that is what Lord Byron says. I know Voltaire says, in language not quite so vulgar, but in language equally intelligible, that man is always devouring or being devoured, that he is a carcase rather than a man. Am I to take Lord Byron's and Voltaire's account? I will listen to David, I will listen to Paul, I will listen Peter, and to John, and to Habakkuk, and to Daniel; I will listen to the army of martyrs, the fellowship of the apostles, and the company of the prophets, and the choir of believers; I will take their deliverance, and accept their testimony, for they have tried the matter, and they say, "Thou, Lord, hast made me glad in thy works: I will triumph in the work of thy hands."

I now crave your kind attention just for a few minutes—for I am aware of the pressure that is upon you, and of the weight of the atmosphere, and am anxious that I should not hold you to any inconvenient length—to two or three, or four considerations, or grounds on which a contemplation of the work of grace and redemption is so fitted to kindle emotions of joy and gladness in the breasts of good men.

In the first place, then, I say, it may well do so, because it is a work of such beneficial character and tendency. As a work of reparation of that that has been damaged, of renewal of that which has been defaced, of recovery of that that has been wandering, of salvation of that that was lost, it cannot be viewed by a thoughtful mind without the deepest emotions. I never can sufficiently admire those well selected words of that famous angel who came to announce the nativity of the Saviour: "Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy; for unto you is born a Saviour." My brethren, the greatest character mentioned in the Bible is our Saviour. My brethren, my fellow countrymen, the greatest saying in the Bible is, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. The great work of Christ is, was, and ever will be, to save.

"Salvation, oh, the joyful sound,
What pleasure to our ears!
A sovereign balm for every wound,
A cordial for our fears."

To see one, and another, and then another, of our fellow-men, renewed, regenerated, justified, adopted, sanctified, beatified, glorified—ah! that is a sight—of all sights the most gladdening. When Barnabas went into Antioch, and saw the grace of God, he was glad. When Paul became the instrument of effecting the conversion of any poor sinner, though that sinner were but the runaway body slave of another man, how excited he became. I cannot but say I think there is an error somewhere. Either we make too little of such an event, or Paul made too much of it. He wrote a letter to the master of that poor runaway body slave, telling him what he had done. I declare

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if he had converted a whole continent he could not have made more of it. Ah ! I think he was right, for the angels in heaven are with him. "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." Let but a tear of repentance gather on an eye unused to such a secretion ; let but a sigh of contrition form in a bosom unused to such an emotion ; let any poor sinner down here repent, and God announces the fact up in heaven ; some angel writes the man's name down in a book ; another angel with a swift wing gets up, and it flies all abroad ; he tells the blessed news ; the harps are caught up, the melodies are afloat, jubilees begin ; and all the hierarchy of the skies rejoice over the event of the repentance of a sinner on earth. Wherever you see a sinner converted from the error of his ways, you see the first fruits of a most glorious state, the scene of a mighty harvest. "Thou Lord hast made me glad in thy works : I will triumph in the work of thy hands."

Secondly, I wish to say that a contemplation of this work of God is eminently fitted to kindle emotions of joy and gladness in the breasts of good men, because it contains the richest impress of the hand of its author. All the works of God have some marks of his authorship. Is it Dr. Watts or some other sweet Christian minstrel who says—

"The meanest pin in nature's frame
Marks out some letters of God's name."

Pass through the sky. The stars, and suns, and comets, and systems, rolling round and round—those immense masses of matter moving in their orbit with such soft and graceful ease, are

"Singing as they shine,
The hand that made us is divine."

Pass through the great wide sea : it tells of its author. The ocean is an image, I had almost said, of divinity, a mirror of infinity, a reflection of eternity—ever preaching of God, of his infinity, immensity, and eternity. So I might go on, but so I will not do. I say that this work of grace contains a richer impress of the hand of its divine author than do the works of nature. When our Lord Jesus Christ came a light into our world, darkness covered it, gross darkness lay upon it ; and standing on earth, looking to heaven, lifting his hand he said—I had almost said he boasted, and if I had said so, I should not have recalled the expression : we cannot boast ; no man can boast ; no creature can boast ; but Jesus Christ boasted, and had a right to boast ; and of all the utterances that he said, is not this one of the most affecting ? Standing on the earth and looking up to heaven, he said, "Father, I have manifested thy name ; I have declared it, and I will declare it." "No man hath seen God at any time ; the only-begotten in the bosom of the Father, he hath revealed him." Oh ! these words, "He hath revealed him." What a revelation ! a revelation of God ! And when the apostles went forth preaching the gospel—preaching the Father the author of the gospel, and Christ the principal subject of the gospel, then there followed changes which are described by the apostle Paul in his own masterly way ; and if any body wants me to give him an expression containing the whole philosophy of religion, I will give him the following : "We all beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord are changed by the same image from glory unto glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord,"

And what I have said of the general character of God, I now say of the several parts of that character—if indeed I may use such an expression, when speaking of the Almighty. Of course, by the parts of his character, I mean his perfections, his attributes. And where is there such a display of power as in this work of redemption ? Where is there such a manifestation of power as in the resurrection of the body of the Saviour, and of the conversion of the dead soul of the sinner ? I know they had put the body of the Saviour into a sepulchre hewn out of a rock ; I know they rolled a great stone into the mouth of it ; I know they set a watch and put a seal. Did they roll a great stone there ? If they had dug up all the hills round about

Jerusalem, and put them on the sepulchre,—if they had dug the Alps up to the root, dissected the Andes from her foundation, cut up the Himmalayah from her bed, and had put the Alps, and the Andes, and the Himmalayah, all on the sepulchre of Christ, would it have prevented the resurrection of his body? No; he was raised according to the mighty working of the glorious power of God. And what I say of this power in effecting the resurrection of the body of the Saviour from the grave, is equally true in effecting the conversion of the soul of the sinner. There is a grave for you, there is a mausoleum, there is a sepulchre, on which is written with the finger of God, “dead in trespasses and in sins.” Can the dead live? Will the charnel house move? Will the grave fly open? “You hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins.” Oh! the power of grace in us. And what I said of the power of God is equally true of the wisdom of God, and of all his other attributes. There is wisdom displayed in his works of nature, and his movements of providence, as we have said. Look at the flower in your garden. Look at the arrangements of the petals to form the corolla; look how one petal is put alongside another petal, and the whole grouped together in such a wondrous way that there is the largest collection of beauty in the smallest possible space, the largest accumulation of odour in the tiniest cavities. Look at that flower; and then turn your eyes upward to the surface of the sky, and see the flowers there; for if there are flowers of earth there are also flowers of the sky. God hath sent the constellations; they are flowers. When he made the stars he did not fling them out of his hands like so many loose points of light to find their own location in the firmament. He made Arcturus, he made Orion, he made the Pleiades. He grouped the stars. Just as he grouped the petals to form the flowers, so he grouped the stars to form the constellation. There is the constellation shining over our heads; and what but grouped in such a way as to flash the largest amount of beauty, and shed the richest radiance of benignant influence on this lower world? But oh! look this way, and there is one speaking who says, “I am the Rose of Sharon,” “I am the lily of the valley,” “I am the bright and morning star.” I do not wonder that the apostle Paul, that master spirit, whose strokes were all his own—I do not wonder that he should say, that God in this scheme of redemption has “abounded in all wisdom.” I have not time to follow this out—I mean you have not time to permit me; therefore what I have said here must serve as a sample of what might be said as to all the other attributes of the Godhead. They are all revealed in the work of redemption, as they are revealed nowhere else.

Thirdly, I take leave for a moment to say, that this work is eminently calculated to inspire the breasts of good men with emotions of peculiar joy and gladness, because it is a work so surprising and unexpected. Surprise is that faculty of the mind which has the power of very materially heightening the effect of anything. I am not going to trouble you with the philosophy of surprise; I merely say, it is that faculty of the mind which has the power of very materially heightening the effect of anything upon that mind. If any event occurs which you had no conception of—if it occurs suddenly, beyond all your calculations, the very suddenness and unexpectedness of its occurrence gives it a purchase over the mind. This holds true as to Christianity—I say it is the most unexpected of all things. It never entered into the mind of man, abounding as its thoughts are, discursive, explorative, analytical as they are. It never occurred to the mind of man that God, in order to effect the conversion of the sinner, the destruction of sin, and the creation of the beauties of holiness, would give his own Son, take him out of his own bosom, send him down into our world, clothe him in our nature, put him in our low place, and then pour upon him the wrath which we had accumulated. It never occurred to the mind of any one that, in order to render the interposition of his Son effectual to actual salvation, God would send his Holy Spirit, and say to him, “Go you after that sinner, go and catch him, convince him, soften him, draw him, go to him, tell him I send you on an errand of love, bring him to Christ, fetch him to the cross, that he may be saved and saved for ever.” Here God has gone beyond all our expectations. His ways are not

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as our ways ; his thoughts are not as our thoughts. The effects of the gospel are all startling ; the doctrines of the gospel are all surprising ; the privileges of the gospel are all transcendental ; the prospects of the gospel—nay, I must here avail myself of language consecrated by inspiration, and say, “Eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive what God hath laid up for them that love him.” As to the afflictions of life, Christianity places them in quite a new point of view. Now afflictions seem to be blessings ; now the cross is found to be a crown ; now shame is found to be glory. “Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, works out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.”

I add, once more, that this work is eminently fitted to excite emotions of joy and gladness in us, on account of its permanency. Sometimes this work appears to go on faster than at other times ; it seems to have a more rapid progress in some places than in other places. Sometimes it seems as if there were a suspension of it ; but no, there is never a suspension of it ; the work is always going on. When our voices have ceased to speak of it, and our hearts have given up beating in sympathy with it, other voices shall be telling of it, and other hearts shall be moving with it. Thus and thus shall it be till the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, till the light of the sun shall be as the light of seven suns together. Thus and thus shall it be till the beauties of holiness clothe every region, and songs of salvation float on every breeze. Thus and thus shall it be. This work shall advance, and spread, and triumph, and grow, and prosper, till there shall be unbelief nowhere, faith everywhere ; hatred nowhere, love everywhere ; confusion nowhere, order everywhere ; war nowhere, peace everywhere ; darkness nowhere, light everywhere ; Satan nowhere on earth, Christ everywhere.

Finally, my friends, this work is eminently fitted to kindle emotions of the highest joy, because of its necessary connection with still higher operations. I don't know whereabouts we are in this work ; I don't know what link we form in this great chain ; but the works are in progress ; the links are adding, and some that are added are already rubbing into brightness before our eyes. As the works of that clock will not stop for me, I must content myself with saying that the work is too much for one world to hold. When it has filled one world it will rush over into another, and fill the recesses of eternity when earth is a cinder and time a story.

Now, my dear friends,—for, having spoken to you an hour upon things like this, I think a colder and more formal mode of address will do no justice to my feelings towards you ; your minds and my mind cannot coalesce here for an hour in truths of this nature without affinities ; at any rate, mine become strong towards you, whatever be the strength of your affinities towards me ; therefore, I cannot adopt a colder mode of utterance than that of my dear friends and brethren—what think you of this work of God ? When David wanted an ordinary measure of joy and gladness he contemplated the ordinary works of God—his works of creation and providence ; but when he wanted a holiday of joy, a jubilee of joy, a triumph of joy, he stood on Mount Zion, tuned his harp to the wonders of redemption, and then his joy, which before had been regular and even, swelled like a river swollen by streams, descending from a thousand hills ; the mighty torrent fills up all this bed of river, reaches its margin, flows over its bank, and floods the adjacent country. So the Psalmist had a triumph of joy : “Thou, Lord, hast made me glad through thy work : I will triumph in the work of thy hands.” Are you the subjects of this work ? “Marvel, not, I say to you, Ye must be born again.” Except a man be converted, he cannot see the kingdom of God. May I call upon you who are the subjects of this work to seek for its extension in your own experience ? All that you have experienced of it, is little compared with what you may experience. What says Paul himself ? “I count not myself to have apprehended.” “I count all things but loss, that I may know”—may know ! Why, did he not know ? He had been six and twenty years at the feet of Christ ; he had written his divine epistles ; he had been caught up into the third heaven. Did not he know ? He says, “that I *may* know.” But is it some new school of knowledge he wishes to get into ? No, it is not a new

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school ; he only wanted to get on a higher form in the same school. Now, my dear friends and Christian brethren, I call upon you to labour to promote the extension of this work among others around you. Let no man live to himself. "Curse ye Meroz, curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof ; because they came not to the help of the Lord." What, does God need help ? No, he does not need help, but he allows you to help ; and because he allows you to help he challenges your help. "Come out to the help of the Lord against the mighty." Christ has got into his car of truth ; he has ascended his chariot : the chariot moves, the anthem swells, the chorus begins its hallelujah ; the King is coming, go ye out to meet him. Step out, step out ; if you do not you will be trodden under foot, or left ingloriously behind. "These are they," he will say by and by, "that followed me in the regeneration ; I appoint to you the kingdom of heaven."

Finally, there are some men, the ignorant, the infidel, the sensual, of this generation, who affect to despise this work of God, to sneer at it, to calumniate it, to misrepresent it as fanaticism, Quixotism, enthusiasm. I am not surprised at it. These men were foretold in the Scriptures : "Behold I work a work in your day which ye will in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you." Suffer me to warn such men. Not merely are they foretold, but their doom is foretold, if they persist in despising the work of God. "Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish." It never can be a small matter to despise a work which God Almighty works ; it never can be a venial matter to ridicule and sneer at that work of which the Holy Ghost has the administration ; it never can be a trifling fault to ridicule and misrepresent that work which occupies the energies of the Son of God on his throne at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens ; it can never be a slight matter to sneer at and ridicule that work which occupies the contemplation of the highest powers and the highest angels ; it never can be a small matter to trample under foot and ridicule that work which kindles in the breast of the purest men sentiments of the highest gladness and joy.

My brethren, my friends, instead of standing up addressing you any longer, I thank you for having listened so long as you have done, with so much attention. And now I may turn round, and congratulate my friends on my right hand and on my left who projected these services, whose kindness, patriotism, philanthropy, and piety, devised the scheme, and furnished what was needful in order to its being carried out. I never can look upon Exeter Hall, after leaving it this morning, without attaching to it the profoundest interest because of these great religious solemnities held in it on this great, this matchless occasion—the Exhibition of 1851. I cannot but say, that in my humble opinion, one of the happiest incidents connected with it has been the holding in this great Hall, solemn, religious, and devotional gatherings of the people ; and that in this Hall which has so often rung with sentiments of physical truth, scientific truth, and political truth, evangelical truth has been listened to with as profound an interest as any *savant* or philosopher ever obtained for his scientific or philosophical truth. We have waved the white flag here, we have blown the silver trumpet here ; we have held up the banner of the cross. I hold it up ; I raise the white flag ; I give out the gospel invitation : "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters." The Spirit saith, come ; the Bride saith, come, let him that heareth say come ; and whosoever will let him come"—Who shall forbid him? "And let him take of the water of life freely." And now to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, one God, the God of our salvation, be honour, glory, dominion, and power, for ever. Amen.

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A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY EVENING, AUGUST 31, 1851,

BY THE REV. T. E. THORESBY,

AT EXETER HALL.

"Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law."—
Romans iii. 28.

It is probable that some of *you* have not yet arrived at that conclusion. Perhaps up to the present time you have never thought carefully upon the subject. You belong to no church, and have no creed in which any conclusion is stated. You pride yourself upon never interfering with religious controversy. Have you ever thought that there was a church in the days of the apostles, and that that church had a creed? There were some things which they believed, those things were included in "the faith once delivered to the saints." They did not invent that faith, nor discover it; it was "delivered" to them, and they "contended earnestly" for it. I suppose there must be some religious controversy yet; and probably that controversy will virtually hinge upon this doctrine—the doctrine of justification by faith only. It has been said by no mean authority, that it is the mark of a standing or falling church. That church which holds this doctrine is built upon the foundation which God has laid in Zion; and that church which repudiates it is "fallen from grace;" that is from the doctrine which proclaims, "by grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not of works lest any man should boast." We are not surprised that Roman Popery not only rejects this doctrine, but anathematizes the man who holds it. We preach Christ's gospel to the world, and this doctrine as essential to that gospel. It is rather difficult to determine as to some things whether they are essential to the gospel of Christ or not, but certainly this is not one of them. I say, we preach Christ's gospel to the world, and this doctrine as essential to it, and then hurl back Rome's anathema, exclaiming with the apostle—"though we or an angel from heaven preach any other, let him be accursed."

This doctrine will be found to supply a leverage that shall overturn Popery, whether it be Roman or Anglican, whether in this, or in any other realm; and

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the men who will employ that leverage are not the men who can defend this doctrine by logical process, basing the process upon the word of God, merely; but those who know the blessedness of the doctrine in their own experience, and who will defend it because they love it as their life.

If this doctrine were better understood, and more firmly held, we should not find persons so frequently "driven about with every wind of doctrine;" there would be a greater stability and persistancy in religious profession.

Moreover, there would be no longer, as there is now, men in our regular congregations who never make any advance in the Christian life. They are seen crowding about the gate of entrance to the religious life, in its completeness, fulness, and blessedness, but they never get any further, and why? because they have not received this doctrine. In vain you talk to them of "the peace of God which passeth all understanding;" they know nothing of that, though they have heard the gospel for many years. In vain you invite them to advancement in that holiness which fills the soul with a divine rapture. There is a previous question which must be settled, and that question is involved in this doctrine—in the conclusion to which the apostle arrives in my text—"that we are justified by faith without the deeds of the law."

I propose to occupy your time, this evening, by directing your attention in the first place to

I. JUSTIFICATION: WHAT IT IS. It will be well in forming our opinions upon religious doctrines, to get them fresh from the Word of God. Now, if you will study this Epistle you will find three things mentioned; first *sin*, then *guilt*, and then *punishment*. It is said, "all have sinned;" that we are all "become guilty before God;" and that "the wrath of God is revealed against all unrighteousness of men"—that is the punishment due to the guilty on account of their sin. What meaning do you attach to the word guilty? There will be no difference of opinion as to what sin is; the word guilt as it is used in this Epistle, means liable to "the judgment of God." Justification is the removal of these three things. It takes away our sin, with that goes our guilt, and with that follows the punishment, and the man is then said to be justified,—pardoned, and accepted of God.

As I was preaching a few days ago, for some schools in the neighbourhood of Brighton, I had occasion to mention the name of the late William Allen—a name familiar to many of you, if not to all—a godly Quaker, who was deeply interested in the well-being of his fellow creatures, and did much to promote their welfare. As I was speaking of him, I observed a black man in the congregation smiling, apparently very much pleased: I inquired about him at the conclusion of the service, and was told that that man had been redeemed from slavery by this pious Quaker, who had paid down the price for his redemption; and not only so, he had settled an annuity upon him for life. Now these two things illustrate what is meant by justification in the scriptures—we are redeemed by the precious blood of Christ; and we are not

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only redeemed, for Christ has opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers, and has bequeathed it to us ; he has left it in his will, his testament, a legacy of love ; he has freed us from condemnation, and conferred upon us everlasting life. This justification is complete at once. You are not to wait till you get to heaven,—till you be perfectly good, before you can be justified. Paul is now in heaven, but he is not more perfectly justified than he was when on earth ; he was not more perfectly justified when he was writing in defence of the doctrine of justification to the Romans, and was some way on his experience, than he was when at first he trusted upon Christ a trembling sinner at Damascus.

You very frequently meet with people who say, I am praying, and I hope some of my sins are forgiven ; I will go on praying, and then all of them will. That is a mistake. God forgives all sin or none at all. He forgives sin not in consequence of the merit of our prayers, but for the sake of what Christ has done. We are “justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus”—“by faith without the deeds of the law.”

Let me show in the second place that this—

II. JUSTIFICATION IS WITHOUT WORKS DONE BY US. I suppose there will be little difference of opinion in this assembly if we first mention works of *ceremonial obedience*, whether they were ordained under the Jewish dispensation or appointed in association with the Christian covenant. We exclude these universally as the ground of justification, or as contributing to that justification.

I suppose that we shall also agree, if we advance in the second place to *works of obedience, to moral precepts*, such for instance as these—“Love thy neighbour as thyself ;” “Do unto others as ye would do unto you.” You do not believe that by fulfilling those commands you will obtain justification before God. You are better instructed than that. But probably we shall differ in opinion if we advance to the next point. I am here to-night to preach justification by faith only—observe, not by faith alone, faith standing alone, i.e. unproductive of good works, such faith is dead—but by faith only; not merely in opposition to justification by ceremonial obedience, and obedience to moral precepts ; but as opposed also to—or at least as standing distinct from—what is sometimes called “gospel experience,” and at others, “moral qualification for the reception of the blessings of the gospel.” I think it very probable that those of you who have never entered into the enjoyment of the peace of the gospel have been stumbling at this stumbling block. You have been waiting for something which you have not yet, ah ! and which you never will have. You have been waiting for something to take with you to Christ—a moral qualification to go to Christ ! I wish to show that you are justified as sinners, and not as saints, and that without these moral qualifications the gospel invites you to come to Christ, promising you full salvation, assuring you that you shall in no wise be cast

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out,—“To him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.”

That you are to have some “moral qualification” for the reception of the blessings of the gospel, I believe to be one great error in the preaching of the gospel in the present day. There are these objections to it.

In the first place, it leads you to suppose that the commencement of your religion, at least, is to be *without* Christ, that you are to go some little way in religion, and when you are properly qualified by knowledge, or by feeling, by desire, by repentance, or by faith, that then you are to come to Christ. The gospel does not teach you that ; that is justification by faith and works, it is not justification by faith *only*.

How frequently do we hear persons say—I do not quite understand the gospel ; I want more knowledge, and then I will go to Jesus. Others say—I have no desire for spiritual blessings ; when I have that desire I will go to the Saviour. My sorrow for sin is not yet deep enough : I must receive the Holy Spirit, who must make me sorry for sin, and then I will go to Christ. I have no faith : I must wait for faith, and then I will go to Christ. Now, the gospel says, you must come to Christ for all these. So far as knowledge is concerned, who can teach like Christ ? Spiritual desires ! Who can impart them like Christ? Repentance ! Where are you so likely to learn repentance as at the cross of Christ ! “He is exalted to give repentance.” And faith, where so likely to believe as in the company of him who is truth itself ! and to whom the disciples of old said—“Lord, increase our faith.” Peter said to Jesus—“Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.” Could Peter make himself less sinful without Christ ? Had he not at last to bring *all* his sins to Christ, and did not Christ at last take them all away ; and I ask *you*, must you not at last, however long you may linger, bring your sins to Christ. If your sins be ever pardoned, must pardon not be obtained, by the mercy of God, through Christ Jesus ? Will they become less by your remaining as you are ? Will Christ’s work be ever more sufficient than it is now ? “Behold now is the accepted time ; now is the day of salvation.”

It is not only to be opposed because it teaches you that a part of your religion is to be without Christ, but because it is opposed to the order in which the Holy Spirit works upon men in their salvation. I may be told to go back to the day of Pentecost ; was not the Holy Spirit poured out ; and then afterwards men went to Christ. The Holy Spirit was poured out as Christ was preached to the people ; in fact, as the mind of the vast multitude was brought into direct contact with Christ. It was the preaching of Christ that first made them cry—“What must we do ?” Then Peter directed them to “repent”—that is, change their minds towards Jesus. They had rejected him—now receive him, and be baptized in the name of Jesus as a public declaration, that they had changed their conduct towards him—“For,” or unto

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"the remission of sins." It was to say, that they, as sinners, had come to Jesus to be forgiven and saved. And then, in the passage in the Gospel by John, where it is said the Holy Spirit shall "convince the world of sin," that is through Christ; he was to convince the world of sin because they believed not on him; of righteousness, said the Saviour himself, because I go to the Father; of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged; that is, because Christ had overturned his kingdom. The work of the Holy Spirit is in relation to Christ from first to last.

Then you will observe further, that this wrong way of preaching the gospel is contrary to the practice of the most learned doctors of the church. Those who have been most successful in converting souls to Christ, from Paul down to Whitefield, and Wesley, and the evangelical succession. I say not apostolical succession—in the Church of England, were men who preached Christ's salvation most simply, as exactly adapted to the state of the sinner.

My fellow sinners, be not kept from Christ by seeking any of these supposed moral qualifications for the gospel. The gospel is exactly adapted to your present condition. What are you? A sinner? Ah, and sinful as well. Here is pardon for your sins, and holiness for your sinfulness. There is something more. There is in you a desire that distinguishes you from all inferior creatures. You may reason yourself into perplexity about a future world: you may have doubts as to whether the soul shall live for ever. But tell me this—Have you not a desire for "immortality and eternal life?" Does not your soul thirst with an unquenchable thirst for eternal life? The gospel brings you that. It meets you as a sinner, and proclaims justification, taking away all your sin, and your guilt, and your punishment, and points you to heaven, and says, that is the free gift of God to a sinful world, and shall be possessed by all those who have faith in Jesus—"Believe! and thou shalt be saved."

I have said that this sort of preaching is that which has been most successful in the hands of the most distinguished doctors of the church of Christ. I will not attempt an enumeration of their names. If I were to do so, I have no doubt you would say they were men who went through much trouble; who went on inquiring and obtaining knowledge, and who often were the subjects of spiritual desires, "strong convictions," and much sorrow. They wept, some of them, night and day. Bunyan, for example—and then at last they had faith, and came to Christ. True, my friends, and I quote their experience as a confirmation of the doctrine which I am now preaching to you. They did weep night and day, and O, how they longed for the simple gospel, the full Christ of the gospel, they went to this and to the other, and again to another source for "rest," but could "find none." They were like a man who is afflicted with some dire malady; he goes to this physician, who does not cure him, whether he can or no, and a second and he does not, and a third, and he does not; at last, he finds a man who

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understands his case, who undertakes it, and who cures him. The man goes forth in the enjoyment of health; and if he finds other men afflicted as he was, he does not send them to the physicians who could not cure him, to whom he applied in vain—no, he sends them to the man who effected the cure; and so these noble ministers of the gospel, these men who preached the gospel with the Holy Ghost, sent down from heaven, they went forth to a perishing world, and they preached Christ to that world—not that the people were to prepare themselves for Christ, but that Christ and his salvation were exactly adapted to their circumstances. The others were reckoned physicians of no value, and they preached Christ with divine success. Sinners said that was the salvation they needed; they applied to Christ in their simplicity, and were saved; they were justified by faith only.

Will you bear with me a short time longer, whilst I just show you in confirmation of what I have already said—that the *reasons for faith are in no case found in yourself*. You are not to say, I have so much knowledge of Christ, and therefore I may go to him. I have lived a very sinful life, but now I am very sorry for my sin, and therefore I may go to Christ. I used to be under the influence of infidelity, but I have found it to be a hollow system, and now feel a tendency to believe, I therefore may go to Christ. No, the reasons for faith are all without yourself. I will mention two or three; first *the provision which God has made in the gospel*, the salvation of the gospel, is not from man, if it were you might withhold your confidence from it; but it is from God himself who knows what you need. “God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son.” “The FATHER sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world.” “Him hath God set forth to be the propitiation for our sins.” This fact should encourage you to trust, you cannot suppose God would make a provision that is unworthy of your confidence. If God has provided salvation, certainly you may trust in it; there is the first reason for faith.

The second is this—the *freeness of the invitation*. I hear some people say, the invitations of the gospel always suppose some “moral qualification”—here we have the moral qualification again—in the party to whom they are addressed. I am here to deny that proposition, and to prove to the contrary. One of the strongholds of those who thus expound the gospel, is the passage where God affirms that he will give “the Holy Spirit to them that ask him.” They reason in this way—you know the Scripture is, “If ye being evil know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him;” and they say, ah, that is a promise to God’s children, that is a parallel between your children and God’s children. But the fact is, it is an argument from your benevolence to the divine benevolence. Suppose one of you reduced to poverty; and your children were crying for bread, could you find it in your heart, if you had bread at your disposal, to deny a portion to your starving children? Your father’s heart would move instantly, and you would give them bread to the ex-

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tent of your ability. "Now," says Christ, "if ye being evil know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall *your heavenly Father* give his Holy Spirit to *them that ask him*." There is the stress of the Scripture—it is to them that *ask*.

If the gospel is addressed to those only who have a moral qualification to receive it, and not to men generally, then it is not addressed to a single man in the world, for no man has a moral qualification until the gospel leads him to its possession.

But a third reason for faith is to be found in the *veracity of the promise*—God himself has promised salvation to every one who believes or trusts in Christ. Say then, it must be a venture at last. I have the word of God to rely upon, and I can never have anything better; then I will trust upon Christ and wait the result.

Let me endeavour in the third and last place to show you—

III. WHAT THE FAITH IS, BY WHICH ONLY WE ARE JUSTIFIED. I hear many persons object to the gospel, and say it is an arbitrary arrangement that men must believe a certain number of propositions, or else they cannot be saved; and that they must be damned if they do not believe these propositions. *Faith is something more than belief in propositions*. The propositions which you are required to believe, in the gospel, as necessary to salvation, are very few, and they all have an influence upon the heart. It is not only to believe a record. There is a distinction, which I think has not been sufficiently shown, between belief and faith. *We believe a testimony, and we have faith in a character*. Here is one comes and makes a statement to us—seeing the statement is credible, and knowing the man's veracity, we believe what he says; but when he undertakes to do something for us, he requires his character to be trusted. God says, certain things have been done. He also promises us others. We believe the former and trust the latter. We have, therefore, not only to believe his testimony as a true one, but if we would benefit by what he says to us, we must confide in his character, and his love. What, my friends, is the gospel but an expression of God's love to us? This is the gospel—"God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, might not perish, but have everlasting life." You believe that, but you are not saved. That is the belief of the testimony. Now if you could go on adding to that testimony much more that is said in the gospel, that would not save you—you must confide in God—have faith in God. He will never disappoint your expectations. Here is a man comes to me and says, I have a sum of money, but it is in danger of being lost, where shall I put it that it may be safe. I direct him to a man of excellent character, with whom anything may be trusted: he goes away, and *believes* all I say about the man but does not *trust* his money with him, does not remove it from the place of danger, and place it in the hands of a man where it will be safe, then he is not benefitted by his belief; in addition to it he must have faith. So with

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sinners: they come to hear the gospel, and say, "What must I do to be saved? We preach Christ to them; we say, "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." They believe all we say about Christ, but they do not trust him, do not commit their souls to his hands, they do not confide in his sacrifice, in his righteousness, in his intercession, in his love, and in his power, and therefore they are not benefitted by what they believe.

Do you believe the testimony of the gospel concerning Christ? Do you believe to-night, that Christ is a Saviour, "able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him?" Then why not come and trust? Do you believe, that if you commit your soul to Christ's hands, he will save you? Then why not do so? Do it now, and it shall be your happiness to go through this world in the possession of a conscience that shall be to you a well-spring of life and happiness; you will be able to say, "I know whom I have trusted, and am persuaded he is able to keep that which I have committed to him until that day."

300

The following Nos. of the Penny Pulpit contain Sermons delivered at Exeter Hall.

- 1,700, The Great Exhibition, by the Rev. T. Binney.
- 1,701, The Gift of God, by the Hon. and Rev. B. W. Noel, M.A.
- 1,705, The Prodigal's Return, by the Rev. W. Brock.
- 1,706, The City of Refuge, by the Rev. J. Beaumont, M.D.
- 1,710, The Truth, by the Rev. J. Aldis.
- 1,711, Wisdom's Invitation, by the Rev. G. Smith.
- 1,713, Looking to Christ, by the Rev. J. Hamilton, D.D.
- 1,714, Why will ye die? by the Rev. J. Stoughton.
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- 1,738, The Hope of the Believer, by the Rev. W. Brock.
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- 1,741—42, The Catholicity of the Gospel, by the Rev. J. Dixon, D.D.
- 1,743, The Saviour Knocking at the Door, by the Rev. James Hamilton, D.D.
- 1,744, The Righteousness of God, by the Rev. J. Beaumont, M.D.
- 1,747—48, Great Gatherings, by the Rev. J. Stoughton.
- 1,750, The Mystery of Life, by the Rev. G. Smith.
- 1,751, The Brazen Serpent, by the Rev. W. Chalmers.
- 1,752, The Heirs of God, by the Rev. T. Binney.
- 1,753—54, The ultimate moral purpose of Christianity, by the Rev. H. Allon,
- 1,756, Christ Head over all things to the Church, by the Rev. J. C. Harrison.
- 1,759, The Redeemed from among all Nations, by the Rev. J. Weir.
- 1,760, Life in Christ, by Thomas Archer, D.D.
- 1,762, Spiritual conflict, by the Rev. J. Aldis.
- 1,763, Justification by Faith, by the Rev. J. Stoughton.
- 1,764, The Heavenly Canaan, by the Rev. T. Aveling.
- 1,765, The Marriage Feast, by the Rev. W. B. Noel, M.A.
- 1,767, First Magnitudes—Biographical Theology, by the Rev. J. Hamilton, D.D.
- 1,768, Christian Steadfastness, by the Rev. C. Stovel.
- 1,769, The truth as it is in Jesus, by the Rev. J. B. Brown, A.M.
- 1,770, Divine workmanship, by the Rev. J. Beaumont, M.D.
- 1,772, The power of the Divine word, by the Rev. F. A. Cox, D.D. LLD.

(To be continued.)

THE POWER OF THE DIVINE WORD.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 7, 1851,

BY THE REV. F. A. COX, D.D. LL.D.,

AT EXETER HALL.

"For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."—Hebrews iv. 12.

At that period in the history of the world, which is emphatically denominated, "the Primitive times," Asia Minor in general, and Palestine in particular, presented a remarkable scene. Heathenism and Judaism alike, felt the withering influence of a new and mightier power. The shadows of the one, and the splendours of the other fled before it, and the world assumed another aspect than that which it had presented before. In the cities, towns, and villages, multitudes of men changed their views, altered their mode of life, and associated together in groups and companies upon new principles. They learned to renounce the vanities and pleasures of life, to love each other as brethren, and to glorify, by acts of worship and obedience, their great Creator. What, my brethren, was the cause of this moral transformation? How came it to pass? Was it *civilization* that accomplished it? But these effects, generally speaking, did not take place among the wise and cultivated. "Not many wise, not many noble were called." Moreover, when civilization was at its highest point, previously to the introduction of this new influence, no such happy consequences ensued. The classical city of Athens never displayed such effects. Rome, with all its cultivation,—for notwithstanding its military despotism, it was the focus of much mental cultivation—exhibited nothing similar in the state of society. It was not then civilization, nor did civilization prepare for the reception of this influence; because the first most glorious and most extensive effects, were produced amongst persons of quite another order, than the learned and the refined; and, therefore, it is vain for men to talk of civilizing the world, in order to Christianize it—reversing the great principle which our Lord himself has established, of primarily, and at once, addressing his gospel to the poor, the ignorant, and the lost. Was it then *political influence* that produced these effects, introducing new ideas into the human mind, and transforming the character of mankind throughout the cities and villages of Asia Minor? Was it political influence I ask? But the rulers of the world were against it. Instead of promoting this great cause to which we allude, they arose in violent opposition when its few disciples combined together to proclaim the realities of the new religion to the world. Against it! Yes, they imprisoned its adherents; they scourged them; they drove them to ferocious beasts and devouring flames. Besides, Christianity repudiated their interference: it would not call in such an aid: it would not permit human powers to coerce; it rejected the sword as the instrument of its success, for it was a

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kingdom in the heart that it sought to establish. So that it was not by the process of civilization: it was not by means of political influence, that the impression of which we speak was produced upon society. What then? It was the word—emphatically the WORD PREACHED; the word of him who was primarily and essentially, “THE WORD,” and who himself, clothed in our humanity, first “went about all the cities and villages, preaching and teaching the gospel of the kingdom,” and who sent his apostles, with the accompaniment of his own Spirit, to bear the tidings of peace and pardon, to a troubled and guilty world. It was by the simple proclamation of the gospel—the “foolishness of preaching,” as men deem it—that it pleased God to do then what he has ever been since doing—to “save them that believe.” Yes, it was the “word,” for as the text states—“The word of God is quick, and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.”

It is called “the word,” for two reasons; first, because it proceeds from God, and is a revelation of his will to man; and, secondly, because it is employed by the Divine Spirit to accomplish the great ends which Divine mercy has in view by its promulgation—it is the Divine Word, and those ends are accomplished by the saving applications of its truth, to the conscience and the heart. O, that it may be quick and powerful to the conversion of some soul this day, and at this hour! May God, at this time, grant an outpouring of his Holy Spirit, and give a divine testimony to the word of his grace!

We invite you to consider—

1. THE MIGHTY EFFECTS OF THE DIVINE WORD AS THEY ARE HERE DESCRIBED.

II. PRESENT TWO OR THREE CONCLUSIONS TO BE DRAWN FROM THESE STATEMENTS.

I. We shall consider *the mighty effects of the Divine word as they are here described*—not however entering, because it is not necessary, probably, to do so, into any minute or critical explanation of the phraseology of this passage: it may be easily and generally understood. The description here given has a peculiar reference to the case of the sinner. It shows the ground of ministerial appeal, and the reason there is to believe that the gospel, as we preach it, will not be in vain. There are many discouragements, indeed, in the exercise of the Christian ministry, and we so deeply feel them, as sometimes to be ready to say, with an unjustifiable despondency—“Who hath believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?” Our ministrations have to encounter the selfishness of the world, the hardness of the human heart, and the utterly depraved state of man universally. And there are discouragements arising from the conscious feebleness and unworthiness of the individual who proclaims the gospel, and whose sense of insufficiency, in his best moments of reflection, is even appalling. Still, it is a mighty instrument, and all who are engaged in its administration are assured, by the promises of God, that they shall see the results of their labours, and have converted souls for their reward.

This description, moreover, is calculated to revive the gratitude and joy of believers; the word has been to them—as every believer present can testify—what it is here described to be. Experience testifies the truth of this description. Every man who loves our Lord Jesus Christ, in sincerity, has been the subject of this quickening, energetic power. You, my believing brethren, have felt how glorious and gracious the influence of the gospel has been upon your own hearts. This it is that has turned you from the error of your ways, and impelled you forward in the race in which you are now running towards the attainment of an immortal crown.

Let me illustrate this passage by some more special observations.

1. The characteristics of the Divine word, as “quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword,” are illustrated by its effects upon the *intellect of man*. The carnal mind rebels against, and by subtle sophistries, attempts to deny its truth, but it has a powerful and resistless influence upon the un-

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derstanding; spiritualizing that understanding, and enabling it to discern spiritual things. It carries with it undoubtable credence, and forces the reluctant will and judgment. Its doctrines, how heavenly; its precepts, how holy. Its prophecies, how remarkable; prophecies, many of which have been already, most signally, fulfilled, and giving in that fulfilment a sure indication of the accomplishment of all that remains on record, through that providential agency which ordereth all things according to the council of the Divine will.

We have said that this word produces a powerful effect upon the mind or intellect of man. In fact, some of the greatest intellects of our world have been subdued by it. Many among them who have not felt its experimental power have defended its truth. They have been impressed by its evidences, and have felt as Agrippa did, who, when the apostle Paul had been reasoning before him on some of the great realities of the Christian faith, exclaimed, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian." In the publications which have been issued by men of the highest order of mind, we find them expressing the highest admiration of the scriptures—subdued by the grandeur of its representations, the purity of its precepts, and the wondrous character of its revelations.

2. The effect of this word upon the *conscience*, in convincing of sin, and producing Godly sorrow, is an illustration of the description in this passage. It is a sharp two-edged sword, piercing as it were into the very life. In the Revelations, the Redeemer of the world is represented with a sword going out of his mouth, that is, uttering words of sharp and convincing efficacy.

Conscience exists in man in three states—First, in a state of utter blindness, a condition in which the deluded call good evil, and evil good. This is the general state of the Heathen world, and in this condition was the persecutor Saul, when he hastened to Damascus to execute the decisions of his employers against the new-born Christianity. "I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth."

There is another state of the conscience which may be denominated a state of moral hardness, or insensibility; and what multitudes even within the precincts of the Christian sanctuary are there, who have had "line upon line, and precept upon precept, here a little and there a little," to whom the doctrine of salvation through the crucified one has been repeatedly declared, but who remain unaffected by the most pathetic appeals, unmoved by the most cogent arguments, unappalled by the most terrific revelations of the world to come, and unturned from the error of their ways by the most attractive invitations of mercy. They still persist in a course of impiety, with a conscience still obdurate and a heart still unmelted. Conscience may be said to be in a state of active guilt, when allying itself with the passions it will not receive the truth. But the word of God obtains, even in such cases, an irresistible entrance, and like a double-edged sword gives its sin-slaying thrusts into the very marrow of the soul, producing a "repentance that need not to be repented of." It reveals by its analyzing and separating power *a man's own nature to himself*. Before this operates, every man is ignorant of his own real character. He knows not himself as a sinner; but is the very dupe of self-flatterers and deceptions. A man may understand history, and art, and science, but be unacquainted with his own character. He may have travelled far, and penetrated distant regions, without having traversed the dark recesses of his own mind. He may understand well what is called mental philosophy; he may have studied with success the faculties of the mind, the operations of reason, judgment, imagination, and all those combinations of power which we call thought and intelligence; and yet after all know really nothing of himself; he, as a responsible being in the sight of God, amenable to his laws, and by transgression having incurred his awful displeasure. He may reason acutely upon the passions, the affections, and the general operations of his own mind, as men of the greatest genius have done, and yet possess no experimental sense of the truth and power of religion. How many have wandered over the surface of the globe, while there is one little nook at home which they have never explored. A dense cloud has covered and concealed it. It is a *terra incognita*.

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and they never cultivated it, never listened to the admonition of Solomon—“Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life”

Now, my brethren, the word of God as it enters the conscience, and is applied by the Spirits of God, proves itself to be a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart; it will make the painful disclosure to him that he is a sinner against God, and constrain the exclamation, “against thee and thee only have I sinned and done evil in thy sight.” It is common to view sin even when it is acknowledged and condemned by the transgressor in the light simply of its effects on society, or the injury it inflicts on a man’s own reputation, property or health; but when the divine word penetrates the soul with a converting power, it is no longer regarded with reference only to its personal or temporal consequences, but as an atrocious violation of the law and an insult to the glory of God. “Against thee and thee only have I sinned and done this evil in thy sight.”

Then again, my brethren, with regard to the conscience, the word of God is quick and powerful, for it *annihilates the spirit of self-defence, extenuation, and apology*, together with those *self-righteous principles* which exist in the unregenerate man. You see the operation of the self-righteous principle when a person institutes comparisons between the different sins which he has committed against God, in order to draw favourable conclusions on his own behalf, or reasons for extenuating the guilt of any particular transgression, endeavouring to satisfy himself with the persuasion, that his are but small or trifling sins, that they are not like the atrocities of others. Brethren, there is nothing small in sin; nothing trifling in the eyes of an heart-searching God: he looks at the inmost depths of the mind; not merely at the outward action, but at the action in its entirety; in the motive which dictated it as well as the outward conduct which exemplifies it: and when the word of God, accompanied by the Holy Spirit enters the soul, it convinces of sin and annihilates the spirit of apology and extenuation. More than this; it is so powerful; it is such a double-edged sword, so keen and severe in its efforts, that it divides the man from sin. “Whoso confesseth and forsaketh his sins shall obtain mercy.” Observe, my dear hearers, the connection of the two. There are many who confess sin in general terms; “I am a sinner, I have done evil, such and such a thing was wrong, such a course was improper; I confess that I am guilty.” But have you *forsaken sin?* have you separated from it? have you abandoned it? “Whoso confesseth and forsaketh sin shall obtain mercy.” If the word of God produces its appropriate effect upon your heart, it will divide you from your sins; and that to which before you so tenaciously clung, will become detestable in your sight, for you will see that it involves you in present misery and in future woe, and above all, places you in opposition to a wise and holy God.

The word of God then applied by the Spirit will produce humility, self-abasement, and a godly sorrow. The repentance will be a “repentance unto life.” It will lead to Christ through a vale of contrition and humility. Genuine repentance allies itself with faith. It points to the great sacrifice, and leads the humble and penitent soul to the blood that cleanseth from all sin, inducing the penitent at once to realize that there is “a fountain opened for sin and uncleanness;” or as rendered by the poet—

“There is a fountain filled with blood,
Drawn from Immanuel’s veins;
And sinners plunged beneath that flood,
Lose all their guilty stains.”

Through the tears of repentance the sorrowful soul looks to the cross of Jesus, and realizes there the life and the love of heaven; listening to those words of salvation which are sweeter to the spirit than all words besides—“He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life, and shall never come into condemnation.” To how many has this proved a cordial to their profoundest griefs! Do not, my dear hearers, do not stifle convictions or repair to the follies of the world for consolation or diversion. Here is love; here is pardon; here is peace. Christ is set before you as a Saviour and a “great one.” Consider,

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brethren, what you are, and whither you are going. Though mortal, you are yet immortal beings; you must die, but you will live for ever—and where? Where will you be ten thousand ages hence? In rapture or in woe? The alternative is before you, and faith or unbelief must determine. With earnestness, therefore, we approach you, to plead, to persuade you, as otherwise utterly lost, to repair to the cross, to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thus to "lay hold of the hope set before you in the gospel." By faith in the Saviour you will become the conquerors of sin, and of death. "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved,"—Satan cannot prevent it. "Thou *shalt* be saved."

3. The characteristics of this divine word are manifested in the effects of it upon the heart, in producing *sanctification*. This, too, is a severe process, involving much struggle and self-denial. Hence the word of God is not only a two-edged sword in respect to conviction, but in respect to its operations in perfecting religion, and preparing us for eternal glory. My dear friends, bear in mind that the word of God is to slay your sins, and this cannot but be a painful process. It strikes by its very earliest inflictions at the root of carnality: for what said the Saviour? "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me?"

4. The operation of truth is sometimes remarkably "quick" as well as "powerful." A remarkable instance of its quick and mighty operation is recorded in the conversion of Paul, when proceeding to Damascus to search out and imprison the followers of Christ. His mind was full of enmity against Christianity; every passion was in a state of excitement, when intending to fulfil the persecuting orders which he was commissioned to execute. He thought of nothing less than exterminating Christianity. But, when on the road, a light shone from heaven; and the Word from the excellent glory smote and humbled him at once. "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest." The illumination penetrated his soul while it closed the material sight by its intensity, and the convincing appeal smote him with trembling and astonishment, as, we may say, an arrow of light, quick and irresistible. His entire thoughts and feelings were revolutionized, and when he opened his eyes after three days of blindness, it was found that his moral vision had been purified to see greater glories than ever this beautiful creation could unfold, for he saw "the glory of God in the face of Christ Jesus." The rapid stroke from heaven had made him a convert, a preacher, an apostle of Christianity. In the second chapter of the Acts of the Apostles occurs another illustrious instance of the quick operation and powerful influence of the word of God. Peter preached the gospel to a vast assemblage, and observe how it operated. There were Parthians, Medes, Elamites, dwellers in Mesopotamia, and adjacent countries, who had come up to the feast of Pentecost; and Peter appealed to them on the fulfilment of the prophecy, on the history of Jesus—his crucifixion, resurrection, and enthronement; and of the conduct of Jews in relation to their Messiah. This pungent address brought three thousand souls immediately into the church. I verily believe that we do not anticipate enough, we have not sufficient faith in the operation of divine power. Why should not many in this assembly be converted at once? Why should not the word of God penetrate the sinner's heart to-day? Why should not the young,—of whom I see many around me—receive the gospel, repent, and believe it? Why should not those who have come from curiosity—or from whatever motives, now, in this place, bend the knee, and bow the heart at once to Christ, to-day, receive him in all the fulness of his grace, in all the freeness of his promises, and in all the saving power of his love?

5. The potent influence of the word is often for a long period *concealed from the outward world in the depths of the soul*. It is thus a "discerner of the thoughts." It enters into the life and pierces the inner man; it is a "discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." This representation may reveal the unthought of mystery of grace in some present to-day. Perhaps even many are at this moment conscious of these secret workings of truth within? We know from experience, and from what persons have frequently unfolded to us

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of their states of mind, that there are thoughts, concealed from general observation, and even from the knowledge of persons with whom individuals have been most closely connected, of mighty power and purpose. In young, tender, and timid minds the word of the Lord sometimes operates for a long period unperceived by others and unacknowledged by themselves. In this very assembly there is probably much of this secret working of thought among the youthful multitude. Some of you may be connected with wicked or worldly companions, gaiety beams on your countenances and pleasure brings its delirious dreamings to enchant your steps, and yet within—far, far below the superficial aspect of your conduct, a process of inquiry, and of incipient religious anxiety is going on. Could we dissect that heart of yours—could we discover the inward workings of that portion, however small, of the leaven of immortal truth, diffusing its sacred influence there, we should find, it may be, the hidden convictions of the realities of truth—thoughts of death, judgment, and eternity, enough to make the spirit quail, and the beginnings of a fixed assurance that the world is a deceiver and Christ the only Saviour. Not unfrequently too, are these solemn and irresistible workings in the minds of persons more advanced in life and more fully engaged in the business and bustle of the world. Dr. Doddridge informs us, that Colonel Gardiner, when he was connected with his companions in sin, and the foremost in worldly-joyousness, was the subject of such hidden emotions and convictions, and so unhappy did he become, that at the very moment when he assumed the smile of gaiety, he was wishing himself the very dog in the street, if it were possible to escape his sense of guilt and responsibility.

In the course of a lengthened ministry, I have had occasions to note personally, the operations of this word in reference to its quick and concealed workings; to two of which I may venture to refer. When sojourning for a brief period, in a distant land—America—I was professionally, and delightfully present at a very remarkable case. There was a man, who may be characterized as once the ringleader in a town of a considerable number of disorderly and infidel persons, and a series of public religious services being held in the place, this man, impelled by curiosity, or rather I believe to ridicule the proceedings, went to the assembly. The preacher pursued his theme; and as it often happens, when conviction takes place in the mind, so wonderfully true and clear does it discover a man to himself, the infidel stranger thought he was particularly pointed at, and that his conduct and plans were intended to be exposed; and so powerful was the operation of the truth, that in the midst of the service he rushed out, in a vehement rage, and loudly exclaiming, “I will not be thus exhibited and exposed.” As you may imagine, he determined never to return to such an assembly again; but by the blessing of God the Word had wrought some conviction in his mind, and he was induced, notwithstanding, to revisit it once more. A divine power then accompanied the word; he was “turned from darkness to light, and from the power of sin and Satan to the living God.” He wept, prayed, and believed. It was my happiness to witness the public profession of this man in the presence of some thousands of people. The chosen companions of his unregenerate life were there, and though we apprehended interruption, a solemn silence prevailed while the word evidently produced, even on them, an unwonted, and we trust, a lasting impression. In his case, the word had indeed been both quick and powerful; it entered like a double-edged sword and slew while it discovered the very thoughts and intents of his mind. Another circumstance may be referred to as of a more immediately personal character. On one occasion, after preaching, an individual came and said to me, “Sir, I wish to join your church.” I inquired who he was, and how he had been induced to seek this interview. This led to the following brief narration. “I was an unbeliever, an infidel, and scarcely ever went into any place of worship. I was seized with a dreadful illness: at length my medical attendants stated that they could do nothing more for me, and I must certainly and speedily die. Of this, too, I felt a perfect conviction, and though I had no particular fear, and had no sense of religion, I made a solemn vow, that if by any chance the disease should take a turn, and I should be restored, that the very first thing I would do, after my restoration, should be to search out a place of

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worship and attend the service. It pleased God in his abundant mercy, by slow degrees, to raise me up again; and on the Sunday morning I went out to fulfil my resolution, of going for once to some place of worship. After wandering for some time, first in one direction, then in another, not knowing in what direction to go, I came opposite to the chapel where you usually officiate; at that moment one of my companions meeting me, exclaimed—‘Ah! Is it you? I expected you were gone. What, are you alive, and recovering? That is well: let us go and rejoice over this recovery in a bottle of wine.’ Shewing some reluctance, he said—“Come, come with me, and I'll do you good.” I paused, and overcome by his importunity, I joined him for a step or two, but conscience would not let me wholly yield. I stopped, and said to him—‘I have made a vow; yes, a vow to God.’ “A vow,” said he! “What an absurdity—come, come, you cannot forget the pleasures of our old association. How is this? Come, I say, with me—what good is a vow to do you? I will do you good.” I had no feelings of religion, properly so called, but I had said that I would go to a place of worship, and wresting myself from him, said—‘No, I cannot accompany you now, I must first go into this place of worship.’ Now see the wonder-working power of God, especially in connection with his word. He stated that just as he entered the chapel, for it was late in the morning, I rose in the pulpit and uttered these words—naming the chapter and verse as the text of discourse—“Come thou with us, and we will do thee good.” The first thought that struck him was, well my companion has been telling me that he will do me good if I will go and drink with him; and now you tell me *you* will do me good if I go along with you; I will sit down and hear what sort of good *you* can do me.” The word went with power to his heart, and from that moment he became a changed man. His application on the morning in question was two years after the time, when he had found the good which he had received, and came to profess a Saviour whom he loved. How quick and powerful was God's own truth.

On the characteristic of the word of God in its secret workings upon the mind, I may offer two or three very brief observations.

First, the fact of these secret workings is a great encouragement to ministers. I assure you, brethren, you need not wonder that we are often depressed, often anxious, from the apprehension that we are not doing the good we might, or had reasonably, as we supposed, anticipated. By and bye one, and another and another comes to us, to declare that, on such and such a day, the word reached his heart, compelled him to bow to the Saviour, and separated him from his sins; or that gradual impressions from reiterated appeals, had at length ripened into faith and decision—“We live,” as the apostle says, in reference to the stability of Christians by such disclosures. As those who stand in the faith give us life, those who repent inspire us with similar emotions of joy and gratitude.

Secondly, this consideration should be a very sustaining thought to pious parents. It should induce them to persevere, in effort and in prayer, for their children. Probably, there are pious parents here this morning, who have unconverted children. Doubtless, you *have* often prayed for them: perhaps you do not yet see any particular result—you have reason still to view them as unregenerated. But brethren, do not faint. Have faith in God. Be assured that the word of God is powerful, and it can accomplish all you desire. It may, as we have seen, be doing this, while steeped in your devotions, though you *do* not perceive it: it is on every account your duty still to labour, and still believably to pray. Has not God declared, he is the “hearer of prayer?” He has not informed you of the time or manner of his responses, or of the gracious movements of his Spirit; but prayer has ascended to his throne, and be assured, that if you trust him; if you have have faith in his promise, you will receive blessings from his throne. How many notices have we in the biography of the saints, of children who have been brought to a saving knowledge of the truth in connection with the teachings and prayers of parents! What does the history of pious mothers reveal?

Thirdly; the secret workings of conviction in the conscience should be

THE POWER OF THE DIVINE WORD.

cherished, and not resisted by the sinner himself; which may be regarded as invaluable blessings, and perhaps the germinations of a spiritual life. I have intimated what is a matter of common experience and history, concerning the secret working of God's word in the mind, and it is often working in the breast of the most obdurate sinner. Now, my dear hearers, if I am addressing any who have had these movements and prickings of conscience, let me urge you not to resist their influence. They are the strivings of the Spirit; they are the gracious beginnings of eternal salvation—"Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation." I would willingly enter at greater length than I see it is possible now to do, upon—

II. THE CONCLUSIONS TO BE DRAWN FROM THESE STATEMENTS I will only advert in a very few words to three.

1. The representation of the text ought to *enhance our estimation of the divine word.* It is doing what all the philosophy in the world could never do. How ought we then to estimate it?

2. We should be induced to employ the most zealous efforts for the circulation of the divine word by means of printed copies, and the support of Christian ministrations, both at home and abroad. In harmony with this view, benevolent and pious individuals have instituted religious services in this place during the period of the Great Exhibition, and their earnest desire is, that the preaching of the gospel here may become instrumental in advancing the cause of true Christianity. We humbly pray that the word may not be spoken in vain, but that of the hundreds and thousands assembling from time to time within these walls many, very many, may become converted to God.

3. The characteristics of the Divine Word as given in the text, which we have endeavoured to illustrate, should induce the individual inquiry. What am I doing to obstruct or to sustain its influence in my own soul? My dear hearers, you *must* by the very necessity of the case, having heard the word, either receive or reject it. You never can escape the responsibility of this life. Ask yourself then, as you retire homewards, am I obstructing the progress of divine truth *in my own mind*, or am I yielding to its influence? What your eternity will be belongs to this question; the highest interest of your soul depends upon the inward decisions; woe or misery, life or death, heaven or hell are involved in the result. If you obstruct the truth in your minds, and will not receive it, there is no escape from the "wrath to come;" if you yield to it, if you receive and obey it, if you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, salvation is yours; a crown that fadeth not away—"an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and unfading." I beseech you, as a final demand, not to trifle with the *convictions of your own mind*, but to carry them to a throne of grace, and pray that they may be sealed upon you to eternal salvation.

CHRIST RECEIVING SINNERS.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 7, 1851,

BY THE REV. JOHN WEIR,

(Of the River Terrace Presbyterian Church,)

AT EXETER HALL.

"This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them."—Luke xv. 2.

It is a melancholy truth, my dear brethren, with regard to many of the illustrious men who have been pre-eminently the benefactors of their race, that, whatever veneration and respect may have embalmed their memories when dead, yet, that, during their lives, they have been assailed with the bitterest scorn, and have met with the fiercest opposition. Nobly self-sacrificing as was their spirit; high and holy as were their aims; their characters have been traduced, their motives held up as unworthy and vile, and oftentimes the malignity of those who "hated them without a cause," has only been satiated in their blood!

It was said, by an ancient philosopher, that "if Virtue were to descend from heaven, become incarnate, and walk forth among the sons of men, that, instead of worshipping her, they would conspire, with one consent, to persecute her and put her to death!" And was it not virtually so in the history of those holy prophets of God, who came forth on an errand of mercy, to their fellow-men, and yet "had trials of cruel mockings, and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonments: they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted [impaled], were slain with the sword—they wandered about in sheepskins and in goat skins, being destitute, afflicted, and tormented—they wandered in deserts and in mountains, in dens and caves of the earth?" And was it not thus emphatically with the Messiah himself, when he humbled himself to our low estate, and, "for us men, and our salvation," was made flesh and dwelt among us? You remember the memorable words he used when unmasking the spirit of Pharisaic jealousy and pride which poured forth its venom against himself, and against his forerunner John the Baptist—"Whereunto," he says, "shall I liken this generation? They are as children sitting in the market-place and calling to one another—we have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned unto you, and ye have not lamented." That is, they were like unto little children, who, in their sports, with that happy power of mimicry which distinguishes them, *now* imitate the joyous pipe, that called them to the merry dance, and *anon* have poured forth, in lugubrious tones, the funeral dirge, and summoned their companions to responsive lamentation; but, in their peevish perversity, and unlovely surliness, their companions would unite with them in neither. Thus, said the Saviour, have my countrymen treated me! Whether heavenly wisdom presented herself

CHRIST RECEIVING SINNERS.

before them with an aspect of stern severity and self-denial, and with a voice threatening and awful in its tones; or, whether she approached in cheerful guise, ready to give countenance to the social impulses of the soul—in either case, they had rejected the lesson, and hated the teacher. “For John came neither eating nor drinking”—he appeared in the wilderness and shunned the hospitalities of the loaded board; his drink was not the juice of the grape, but water from the mountain spring: his meat was not the flesh of the fatted calf; or of the tender lamb, but “locusts and wild honey;” and yet they said, “he hath a devil”—he is a morose, gloomy fanatic, and a messenger of Satan. But “the Son of man came eating and drinking” (i.e. using the ordinary food, and drinking the ordinary beverage of his countrymen—mixing with the people at their marriage feasts, and in all their social entertainments—ever courteous, affable, and cheerful,) “and ye say He is a glutton and a wine-bibber; a friend of publicans and sinners.” “But wisdom is justified of her children.” Both the forerunner and his Lord had weighty reasons for their difference of aspect and of conduct. John appeared as the bold pioneer—with his mattock and pickaxe he levels the mountain and exalts the valley—he breaks up the highway, gathers up the stones, makes ready a people prepared for the Lord—and then the King himself appears, and, advances over the road prepared for him, with the sceptre of grace in his hand, and riding in a chariot “paved with love.” But all this, we repeat, did not silence the deep-seated selfishness, the unholy jealousy of his enemies—the grasping covetousness which felt its “craft in danger,” and the abominable hypocrisy which saw itself rebuked in the presence of the Holy One and the Just—and therefore we find this spirit bursting forth afresh in the words before us—“This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them.”

Let not my hearers be startled or alarmed that I have selected these words as the subject of this discourse. I admit that, in the spirit and meaning in which they were first employed, they embodied a charge as diabolically malignant as it was wickedly false; but viewed in harmony with what the Saviour really was—contemplated in the light of his matchless love and condescending mercy to the vilest of the vile—oh! they are true, gloriously true, and eminently illustrative of the gospel. As such, we fold them to our hearts and hail them with thankfulness and joy. I entreat, therefore, your earnest and prayerful attention while we consider the truths taught and the lessons enforced by the spectacle of the Saviour “receiving sinners, and eating with them.”

I. MARK THE UNIVERSALITY OF CHRIST'S MERCY.

It is not said that he receives men of one nation or class; or even that he receives sinners of every nation but of one class; but here, in that one pregnant word—“sinners,” is the description of the entire human family; and Christ is thus emphatically described as a Saviour for *the race*. When the Apostle Paul, in his letter to the Romans, lays deep and broad the foundations of the glorious doctrine of justification by faith alone; you recollect how he first of all establishes the universality of human sinfulness, as embracing alike both the favoured Jew, and the outcast Gentile, by an appeal to the testimony of the Inspired Word—“There is none righteous, no, not one. There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God; they are all gone out of the way; they are altogether become unprofitable, there is none that doeth good, no, not one.” And what is the commentary he makes? What is the conclusion to which he comes? “Now we know that what things soever the

CHRIST RECEIVING SINNERS.

law saith, it saith to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and that all the world may become guilty before God." All men, therefore, being transgressors of the law, are exposed to the awful penalty which a sovereign of inflexible justice has announced—"The soul that sinneth, it shall die;" and "Cursed is every one who continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them."

We do not mean, indeed, to assert that all men are equally sinful in the sight of God. In point of *responsibility* assuredly it is not so. Some of you are sinning amid a blaze of gospel light. Some of you have been guilty of "presumptuous sin" which David has called "the great transgression;" others have been the children of disobedience led captive by the devil at his will; but *their* consciences were never educated by the volume of revealed truth, as *yours* have been, either as to the abominable character of sin on the one hand, or as to the claims of the Holy Lawgiver on the other; and, therefore, while all are condemned, all are not punished with equal severity. "The servant that knew *not* his master's will and did it not, "shall be beaten with *few* stripes;" but the servant who *knew* his master's will and *did it not*, "shall be beaten with *many* stripes." Oh! if there are any here to-night who have been trifling with the gospel, and rejecting those overtures of mercy which have been made to them, be assured that "it shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for you!"

Nor, again, when we assert that all men are sinners, and that, as such, Christ receives them, do we mean to teach that all sins are, in their nature, of equal turpitude and enormity. But we *do* affirm that every man is born with a disposition of intellect and heart which is described as "the carnal mind, which is enmity against God," which "is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." We *do* maintain that, in every man, there reigns a spirit of secret rebellion against the law which is "holy, just, and good," and that all men, as a fallen, guilty, and revolted race—however amiable and just they may be their intercourse with one another—are sinners, and are destitute of that "love" which "is the fulfilling of the law." Would to God that every one before me did but realize this truth! "They that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick." "I came not," says Jesus, "to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." If any of you have been measuring yourselves by the standard of others, and imagine that you are safe for eternity, because you are free from the stain of great and infamous crimes—if any of you are saying, in the spirit of the Pharisee, "God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican"—if, with virtuous self-satisfaction, you contrast your estimable qualities, and the high esteem in which men hold you with the degrading conduct of others—ah! I beseech you to remember that, while many differences do really exist, in a relative point of view, still, just as the earth is really a globe in its form, notwithstanding the indentations produced by the mountains and the valleys—so in the sight of God—who "looketh not at the appearance of things, but regardeth the heart"—you are all sinners in his sight, and have all "come short of the glory of God." Therefore, I bring one message to you all. "Christ receiveth sinners, not of one, but of all classes—not of one, but of all nations. The glorious scheme of redemption has overleaped the boundaries of Palestine; and now, beginning at Jerusalem, the gospel is to be preached throughout the world.

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THE COMMON SALVATION.

that "God is in Christ reconciling the world unto himself"—that Christ Jesus is "the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world;" and I would tell them, in the very language of this book, as I have done all along, that God "willeth not that *any* should perish, but that all should come unto repentance;" and what I would do before the supposed multitude of all the earth, I would do before the actual multitude now assembled in this place. A salvation that would accomplish only by a substitutionary sacrifice of the Lamb of God—a sacrifice which is rendered personally efficacious to you and to me, by the mighty operations of the Spirit of God—I tell each individual here present, of that salvation, *you*—one and all—may take advantage, and that at this very hour! To *you*, I speak, I trust, with reverence, I call God to witness that no man here to-night need leave this Hall an unpardoned sinner! Now mark, learn, and inwardly digest that—*no man, nor woman, nor child, need leave this place an unpardoned sinner!* No reason exists, out of your own hearts, why you should not pass from darkness to light, from death unto life, from the power of Satan unto God. Submit yourselves to the righteousness of God, and the work of your acceptance with God would be done at once; and you cannot do anything in respect of this great work of acceptance with God, except just this submission to the righteousness of God. In other words, it is by just simply accepting the salvation which is in Jesus Christ, and you must receive it ere it can be a salvation to you. If any man here has been saying of this "common salvation," that it will save him whether or not—if any man here has been taking the universality of which I have been speaking, and applying it to the believer and the unbeliever, both alike—he is wresting the scriptures to his own destruction. Light is common enough, but if your eyes are closed, it is of no avail; so too the gospel is free, but if you do not open the eyes of your hearts to receive it, its freeness will be of no avail.

It is not the work of a magical or miraculous agency, but of an ordinary process of your mind in the reception of truth, and in acting according to the dictates which that truth enjoins; but if you say (oh! the wretchedness of that perversity of ours which will pervert anything!) "If it comes to this we may as well go on in sin, for we shall be saved after all;" I say no—it will not save anybody except he comes and seeks for this righteousness which is in and through our Lord Jesus Christ. "Open, then!" You would say to a man whose eyes were closed, and who wanted to see,—"open your eyes!" With regard then to the gospel, I say unto you all—"Open your hearts and let him pour into those hearts the exceeding riches of his grace as shown towards you by the gift of Jesus Christ."

Why should you perish? There is no decree which insists on your perdition. Why should you not be saved? The Apostle writing to Timothy declares, that God wills that all men should be saved by coming to the knowledge of the truth. What hinders you from just setting out upon that course which shall land you in everlasting life?

"Let not conscience make you linger,
Nor of fitness fondly dream;
All the fitness he requireth,
Is to feel your need of him.

And I think I hear him saying to me—"Now tell them in my own words"—"Come, for all things are now ready!"

"Come, then, now while Christ inviteth,
Answer to his gracious call,
If you tarry till you're better,
You will never come at all.

Guilty, though you are, he'll save you,
Through the merits of his blood,
Venture on him, venture wholly,
Let no other trust intrude!"

And in the day that shall declare all things, it shall be declared then, this and that man were born here! "The common salvation!"

May God, of his infinite mercy, administer and apply it to your own hearts, for his name and mercy's sake. Amen.

THE RECEIVER OF SINNERS.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 21, 1851,

BY THE REV. R. HAMILTON,

AT EXETER HALL.

"This man receiveth sinners."—Luke xv. 2.

"It is right to be taught by an enemy," so said an ancient heathen poet, and so say we. Truth is not to be rejected, but is to be cordially received from whatever quarter it may come; and I need scarcely remind you who are acquainted with your Bibles that there are recorded here some interesting and important truths which were uttered by enemies of the Lord and of his anointed. You are oftentimes struck with the beauty and truthfulness of the sentiments uttered by a false Prophet, the prophet Balaam, when he said, "God is not a man that he should lie, nor the Son of man that he should repent; hath he said it and will he not do it; hath he spoken and will he not make it good?" You have discovered a depth of meaning in the utterances of the murderers of our Lord, which was unperceived by them when they tauntingly said, "He saved others, himself he cannot save." You concur in the truthfulness of the declaration made by him who is "the father of lies;" "a liar from the beginning," when he said, "skin for skin, yea all that a man hath will he give for his life." And I believe that there are not a few in this assembly who know, from their own personal and happy experience, that it is a truth that "this man," the man Christ Jesus, "receiveth sinners." They who uttered these words originally uttered them, as you will perceive, from the connection in which the text is found—in scorn and derision. Their object was to detract from Christ's dignity and to bring him into disrepute; but so far from detracting from his dignity, we regard it as his distinction, and as his glory, that he does receive sinners.

Examples are supplied to us of those whom he received and blessed during his residence upon earth. To a Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had cast seven devils, he said, "Thy sins be forgiven thee; go in peace." On another occasion, to the adulteress woman, who was brought to him in the temple, in answer to the statement which was made, that no man had condemned her, he said, "neither do I condemn thee, go and sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon thee." There is not a single instance which can be adduced of any one who came to Christ, however aggravated might have been his guilt, who was rejected by him. Even when he was suffering the death of the cross, and when any one might have supposed that his own sufferings would have absorbed his

CHRIST RECEIVING SINNERS.

We repeat, therefore, that Christ receives, and is ready to receive the worst of sinners. He has proclaimed this glorious truth in the parable of the lost sheep, the lost piece of money, and the prodigal son. He has illustrated it practically in the case of the dying thief, in a Saul of Tarsus, a Colonel Gardiner, a John Newton, a William Hone, and multitudes of others who are now before the throne. "Such were some of you but ye are washed, justified, and sanctified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." Is there then a hoary-headed sinner here, who has plunged into the very depths of sin, who hardened in crime, has long grieved the Spirit of God, laughed at Jehovah's threatenings, and despised his promises? Is there a prodigal son in this assembly, who has forgotten the lessons of a pious home? —who has wrung a mother's heart with agony, and brought down a father's grey hairs with sorrow to the grave? Say not, I beseech you, "there is no hope!" Look up! Jesus receives sinners! "Come and welcome to Jesus Christ." In the words of John Bunyan, (himself a sinner saved by grace) "He wrestled with justice, that thou mightest escape. He was oppressed, that thou mightest go free. He wore a crown of thorns, that thou mightest wear a crown of glory. He was nailed to the cross, with his arms wide open to show that he is ready to receive thee unto his very heart." Be this, then, the hour of your application! be yours now the publican's cry, "God be merciful to me a sinner."

III. JESUS RECEIVES SINNERS AS A BROTHER MAN.

Mark, it is said, "*this man* receiveth sinners." This is literally true; for as "the Son of man," he was as truly and perfectly a man, as he is as "the Son of God" truly and properly God. This then is a "*brother* born for adversity," "for unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, while yet his name is the 'Mighty God,' and his goings forth have been of old—from everlasting." Stoop over that manger-cradle in the stable of Bethlehem, and behold that new-born, helpless infant! Who is he? "Emmanuel, God with us!" Wonderful indeed! Deity united with humanity and humanity with Deity—Omnipotence with weakness—the Infinite with the finite! Look again. Yonder is a youth of twelve years old, who has come up from Galilee to keep his first Passover. What is he doing? He is perplexing and amazing the learned doctors by the strange questions which he puts, and the hard problems which he solves. And what a mysterious reply he gives to his remonstrant mother—"Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" (Luke ii. 49.) Ah! he has a Father. "God is his Father." "Thereby he makes himself equal with God." He boldly affirms—"My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." "I and my Father are one." Oh! sinner! "*this man*" receiveth such as thou art! Young man! he is thy Kinsman, thy Daysman, thine elder Brother. Now make trial of his love! This night embrace him "as the Lord your righteousness," and then you shall realize the truth of the prophecies concerning him—"This man shall be the peace," and "*a man* shall be a hiding place from the wind, a covert from the tempest, as rivers of water in a dry place, and as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land!"

But the crowning glory of our text remains—

IV. CHRIST NOT ONLY RECEIVETH SINNERS, BUT EATETH WITH THEM.
And what does this "*eating with them*" imply? It is a token and pledge of entire reconciliation, of mutual confidence, of perfect peace. To eat bread

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with a man, in ancient times, was the symbol of friendship and the pledge of love. You will recollect that when Jacob made a covenant with Laban, they set up a stone, which they called, "Mizpeh," and that Jacob having prepared a feast, they "did eat bread together" as the symbol that every difference was forgotten, and that harmony was fully restored. When the Spirit spoke by the mouth of David, he said, "He that eateth bread with me, hath lifted up the heel against me," and the prophecy was fulfilled when, in the treachery of Judas, was seen the truth of the Saviour's assurance—"He that dippeth his hand with me in the dish, the same shall betray me." And go into the tent of the Bedouin Arab, even at this day, claim his hospitality, taste with him "the sacred bread and salt," and the robber of the desert becomes your protector, and you are inviolably safe. Therefore, if Jesus "receiveth sinners, and eateth with them," he therein gives them a token that though he was angry with them, his anger is turned away from them—his power is pledged to defend, and his grace is promised to sustain them; and now the eternal God is their refuge, and underneath them are the everlasting arms.

His eating with them also intimates the rich provision of his grace, the hearty welcome which he receives them, and the holy fellowship which they enjoy with him. The gospel blessings are compared to a feast—"Thou preparest a table for me in the presence of mine enemies; thou anointest mine head with oil, my cup runneth over." "In this mountain shall the Lord of hosts make unto all the people a feast of fat things, full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined."

But is it not so, that while "a certain man has made a great supper, and bade many," that multitudes "make light" of the invitation? Is it not so, that while to-night the wine of wisdom, the bread of God, and the choicest grapes of Eschol—the grapes of gospel privileges—the delicious honeycomb of his testimonies, are set forth upon the table, still there are some men here who have no taste to discern, and no appetite to desire this feast? If Jesus, spiritually, eats with sinners in praise, in prayer, and in the reading and hearing of his word, and you say of the day which is consecrated to these things—"When will the Sabbath be gone? It is a weariness, when will it be over?" ought not this to fill your souls with consternation and alarm? And oh! there is one scene, the nearest to heaven—the likest to its holy festivity and joy, on this side of glory—when, above all other times, Jesus comes into his banqueting house, and his banner over his people is love, when he appears with "the savour of his ointments," and with perfumed garments, He sits down at the head of the board, and the disciple that Jesus loves, leans upon his bosom at supper, and feels the heart of Emmanuel throbbing responsive to his own! But are there not multitudes who, to this day, have heard the dying command, but to despise it? It was given for no selfish ends, but in the tenderness of the best of friends, who would increase our faith, inflame our love, deepen our penitence, animate our hope, and stimulate us onward and upward to glory. "Do this in remembrance of me." Out of the multitudes, in this great metropolis, who hear the gospel of the grace of God, it is calculated that there are not more than 80,000 communicants in our churches! and over the length and breadth of these favoured islands of the sea, I fear the proportions are sadly the same! To-night, again, we preach Christ—to-night we tell you—"This man receiveth sinners, and

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eateth with them," but were the table of the Lord to be literally spread after the message is delivered, how many would remain of this multitudinous assemblage to commemorate, by eating the bread, and drinking of the cup, the decease which Jesus accomplished at Jerusalem ?

Men and brethren, if Christ and his salvation be not precious now—if holy fellowship with him is not prized now, then you are "yet in your sins!" Awake ! then, thou that sleepest ; arise and call upon thy God. If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost. If judgment begin at the house of the Lord, what shall the end be of those that obey not the gospel of God? It is the Holy Ghost alone, who can so reveal to you the Saviour's matchless excellencies, and so give you such an appetite for the bounties which Christ spreads before you, as to make you ready to cry, "We will remember thy love more than wine." Seek that Spirit now, for "if ye being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit unto them that ask Him?"

And, finally, ye children of God, be not ashamed to imitate your Lord and Master in his spirit of compassion for the vilest of the vile. Far from you be that affectation of superior sanctity, which would shrink from contact with the abject and the fallen, saying, "Stand by thyself, for I am holier than thou!" If God has blessed you with the talents of wealth and influence—with ability to impart light to them that sit in darkness, and in the region of the shadow of death, make sacrifices, I beseech you, of ease and comfort, that you may relieve the forgotten, that you may dry up the widow's tears, that you may hush the orphan's moan, that you may elevate and ennable the degraded, and swell the tide of that holy patriotism, that earth-gladening philanthropy, which seeks to save souls from death, and to hide a multitude of sins !

Believe me, dear brethren, this holy activity will draw you more closely to Christ, and assimilate you more fully to him who "went about continually doing good." Amid the hurry of this great Babylon, there are those who thus redeem the time, who go out to apprehend the criminal, not with the hand of justice, but of love ; and who pour the oil of gladness into the bleeding wounds of those who are ready to perish. Of such we cry, "Blessed are they of the Lord!"

"They carry music in their hearts,
Through dusky lane and wrangling marts
Plying their daily task with busier feet,
Because their secret souls, a holy strain repeat!"

Press onward, ye servants of God ! in this holy enterprise, for oh ! when you have laboured a little while with Christ, for Christ, and like Christ, and you shall be at last admitted to see him face to face—then you shall find to your glad surprise, to your unutterable joy, one and another of those who have been rescued from Satan by your instrumentality, but from whom proud Pharisees shrunk with loathing—seated by your side at the marriage supper of the Lamb ! "THIS MAN RECEIVETH SINNERS, AND EATETH WITH THEM."

May the Lord bless his word for the Redeemer's sake. Amen.

THE SONG OF REDEMPTION.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 14, 1851,

BY THE REV. JOHN KENNEDY, A.M.,

AT EXETER HALL.

"Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred and tongue and people and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth."—Revelations v. 9, 10.

THIS IS ONE OF THE SONGS OF HEAVEN. IT IS THE SONG OF REDEMPTION.

"There sounds through all the upper sky,

A strain with wonders rife;

That life hath given itself to die,

To bring death back to life."

This strain shall be our theme this morning. It is one of the most varied melody. There is nothing sublime in creation, and nothing vast and mysterious in providence that has not its corresponding notes in redemption. But in the Song of Redemption there is a pathos and a tenderness all its own. The soft and the sweet are here, alternating with the sublime and the lofty, or rather commingling with them, in tones so heavenly, that till we obtain our heavenly voice, we shall endeavour in vain to do them justice.

In presenting this theme we shall have to speak of the Redeemer—the Redemption—its Fruits—its Praise.

I. In the First place; we would learn what the heavenly singers think of their Redeemer, or whom they take him to be.

"Thou"—"Thou art worthy."

Who is He? What do they regard him? The very words, "Thou," "He," "Him"—imply that their Redeemer is a person—a living being—who has willed their good, and to whom grateful acknowledgments are due. Redemption is not a state into which they have been born, or into which they have grown up, or into which they have been transformed by a succession of natural developments. They were once children, they became men, they are now redeemed saints. From being children they became men by natural growth; but from being men they did not pass into the condition of redeemed and perfected saints by a similar growth,—they owe it to the interposition of some person whose love they praise for it. Sin is not a mere defect, characteristic of a certain stage of being, which those who inherit it are destined to outgrow by a law of natural progress, as they outgrow the defects of an earlier stage, such as the feebleness of infancy and the inexperience of youth. It is rather an element of destruction which must be crushed by a mighty hand, or it will effect eternal ruin—it is a principle of death which, if it be allowed to run the course of its natural progress, will bring forth the fruit of eternal perdition. This we learn from the fact, that those who sing the songs of heaven, acknowledge a personal Redeemer. And it is a lesson of no small importance.

But whom do these saints take their Redeemer to be? They call him

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"Lord," and they call him "Lamb." They would not call Jesus "Lord," especially in the presence of the Eternal Throne, and in the very same breath with which they say, "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come," if they were not assured that he still thinks it is no robbery to be equal with God. They would not call Jesus "Lamb," if they did not recognise in him that true human nature which he wore on earth, when John called him "the Lamb of God," and in which he made himself an offering for sin. In revealing the visions of this book to John, Jesus speaks of himself thus—"I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last." And again, "I am the first and the last, and *the living one*; and I was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death." Jesus thus claims to himself the highest honours of Supreme Godhead—the first and the last—from everlasting to everlasting: the living One, the "I am," who only hath immortality—yet he is not ashamed to confess himself a man. Forasmuch as they whom he designed to redeem were partakers of flesh and blood, he likewise took part of the same. That nature as he now wears it he is not ashamed to confess; it is the shrine, the temple, in which the Godhead is manifested in heaven.

That which Jesus avows himself to be, the redeemed acknowledge that he is—"the King of kings, and Lord of lords." It is to him they sing the song of Creation, and to him too they sing the song of Providence. And thus in his person they concentrate the honours of creation and providence and redemption, uniting the worship of Jehovah and Jesus in one act.

On this subject there are many differences of opinion and many controversies on earth, but there is none in heaven. Every knee bows there at the name of Jesus. Every tongue confesses that he is Lord.

This, one might think, ought to settle our differences on this point. They who have been privileged to enter the holiest of all have found Jesus on the throne of God, and have fallen down before him, and have poured out the fullest tribute of adoration, of which their perfected powers are capable, and the sound of their voices hath pierced the screen that separates heaven from earth, bearing on its wings the unqualified intelligence that Jesus is "God over all, blessed for ever."

This, dear brethren, is a vital point. Our judgment on it will affect our judgment on every other. If I believe that such was the depth of my wretchedness, that the arm of God alone hath had power to raise me, and if you believe that out of yours the arm of man hath raised you, we must differ much as to the depth to which we had sunk. If I believe that the redemption which I have obtained has been accomplished by an act of unparalleled grace and power on the part of Incarnate Jehovah, and if you believe that you have obtained redemption at the hand of man, we must differ widely as to the character and extent of the redemption which our souls needed. And if I be right in judging that I am in a condition of guilt and danger from which I can be redeemed only by the blood of an Incarnate Lord, there must be great delusion and fatal error in your conception, that you need no redemption which the teaching or the example of a great and holy man cannot accomplish for you. If on the other hand you are right, I must be in error, an error which involves me in the most criminal of practices, the practice of idolatry. The difference is great and vital. Let the spirits of just men made perfect judge between us.

II. *In the Second place—we consider how this song describes the manner and the nature of redemption.*

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"*Thou wast slain.*" Death is a very common thing in this world's history. You remember the genealogies in the Old Testament which say nothing more of the persons whose names they record than after this fashion : " He lived, he had so many sons and daughters, and he died." The sad and monotonous conclusion in each case is—" and he died." And could you take the census of all that have been born of woman, from the firstborn of Eve downward, and could you tell us the history of every individual of the vast aggregate, there are only two instances in which your tale would not conclude with the same words, " and he died."

Nor is it even an uncommon thing to be slain ! In this wicked world life has been the frequent victim of violence. The wicked have sometimes been cut off by the wicked ; and so, alas ! have the righteous too. There is nothing then in the purity of Christ's character to make it surprising that " he was slain." The list of martyrs which Christ comprehended, from righteous Abel unto Zacharias the son of Barachias, who was slain between the temple and the altar was already large, and from the time of our Lord's reference to it, it has been immensely increased.

In the book of Revelation we have this vision—" And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held ; and they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge, and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth. And white robes were given unto every one of them ; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a season, until their fellow servants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled." (vi. 9, 10.)

But numerous as have been the martyrdoms of the world, and honoured and blessed as are the martyrs before God, there is only one of them whose honours are celebrated in heaven, or of whom it is said there in terms of praise, "*Thou wast slain.*" And he is Jesus Christ. There must be something peculiar in his martyrdom, something to single it out from every other. Were there nothing more to be said of him than "*thou wast slain*"—these words could be addressed to ten thousands beside—and were this alone the ground of praise heaven would ring not with the name of Christ alone, but with the names of ten thousand fellow martyrs as well.

The next note of the song itself, however, reveals the peculiarity of the death of Christ—" thou hast redeemed us by thy blood." If Christ has ten thousand fellow martyrs, he has not one fellow redeemer. In this he is not the first or highest in a long list of noble though distant followers ; he stands absolutely alone. His glory in this respect is not transcendent, it is exclusive—neither man nor angel shares it. "*Thou hast redeemed us by thy blood,*" are words which shall never be addressed to any but himself.

Even the mere martyr's death is not usually without fruit in the world. It does good to men. It increases faith. It awakens energy. It often gives an impulse to the cause which it was designed to injure. So that the well known saying has its truth—" The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church." But the benefit which the blood of martyrdom confers on the church is altogether different from that which the blood of Christ confers on it. His was the blood of sacrifice for sin. He gave his life a ransom for many, and by that ransom the many are redeemed.

The words of the song of redemption, while they distinguish the death of Christ from every other, teach us the true nature of the redemption of which

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the gospel tells us. It is a redemption *by blood*, and of consequence, we know that it must be a redemption *from guilt*. "We are redeemed, not with corruptible things, such as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." The institutes of the old dispensation explain this beautiful scripture. The prominence given to the shedding of blood in these institutes appears at first unnatural, unmeaning, and unreasonable. But man had incurred guilt and forfeited life, and it was fitting that his worship should confess it. This was the design of ancient sacrifice, and that which was only symbolized of old, is realized in the gospel of our Lord. His blood was shed for the remission of the sins of many, and therefore it is said—"We have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins." Not that forgiveness exhausts this redemption, but it is its primary blessing, and antecedent and essential to all others. The poet and the sentimentalist may dream of a redemption of which he has some vague sense of need, but which he does not understand; the gospel believer rejoices in a redemption which is felt by him a simple reality, and in virtue of which he stands pardoned and sanctified before his Maker.

III. *In the Third place; we consider the perfected fruits of redemption as celebrated in this song of heaven.*

"Thou hast redeemed us to God."

There is something remarkably instructive in this little phrase—"to God." They were lost to God—his creatures, but in the strictest sense of the terms, "unprofitable servants," "cumberers of his ground." Made by him, yet run to waste, or rather changed into an element of injury and ruin—they were lost to God. But now they are redeemed to God; made bearers of tribute to his throne,—useful, not indeed to him, for he needs not the service of any, but useful in the place which he has assigned them.

Again—they were enemies to God. And in that position they were separated from God, both by their own enmity and by the legal liabilities of their guilt. Were their enmity overcome, but their guilt unatoned and unpardoned,—restoration to God were still impossible. Or were their guilt pardoned, but their enmity left in all its virulence and strength, restoration were equally impossible. When it is said of them, that they are redeemed to God, it imports a reconciliation, which includes in it both the pardon of their offences by their offended God, and the subduing or removing of the enmity, which, though they were the sinning parties, they bare to him whose name is holiness and love.

We can state the case thus, but who can estimate the vastness of the benefit which redemption *to God* implies? They had wandered from their centre, and, consequently, out of their orbit, they were wandering in darkness; the moral world within them was reduced to disorder, chaos, and death. But now restored, the light of God shines full upon them, and order, beauty, and life, again adorn and animate the soul. They were as trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots; as fields, which, bearing only thorns and briers, are rejected and are nigh unto cursing, whose end is to be burned; but now a rain falls on them, and a sun shines on them, which makes them fruitful, and their soul is as a well watered garden, and as a field which the Lord hath blessed. Redeemed to God, they are redeemed into a state of nearness to him whose infinite fulness supplies a universe with good, and are the objects of his love whose favour is life, whose loving-kindness is better than life.

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The faintest conception of what is involved in being redeemed *to God*, prepares us to read without surprise the glowing terms in which the heavenly state is described.

They have been made *kings* unto God. That is, they have been exalted to a state of royal, or more than royal honour. They may have been slaves on earth, they are kings in heaven. On earth they might have been like their Lord, despised and rejected of men, but in heaven their honour is higher than was the honour of the highest on earth,—they are kings unto God.

And, as their song intimates, they are *priests* likewise. They realize in its fullest import the prayer of David—“One thing have I desired of the Lord—that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord and to inquire in his temple.” (Psalm xxvii. 4.) Not some, but all the redeemed are priests unto God. That which was peculiar to the Jewish priests in their dwelling in the temple, is common to all the redeemed in the heavenly temple. That which was peculiar even to the High Priest who entered once a-year into the holiest of all, and enjoyed the awful privilege of beholding the shekinah, the supernatural symbol of the presence of God, is common to all the redeemed in heaven, who stand in the presence, not of the symbolic, but the real shekinah, and serve their God not in places made with hands which are the figures of the true, but in the great temple not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

All that is honourable in royalty, and all that is privileged in priesthood is not an exaggerated, but really a faint intimation of the high honour and high privilege of the redeemed in glory.

It is said of them, likewise, that “their robes are white.” They were once covered with stains foul and repulsive, but they have been washed, not in the floods of their earthly tribulations, nor in the tears of their penitence, but in the blood of the Lamb. They were once as scarlet, but now they are white as snow; they were red like crimson, but they are now as wool—all through the divine efficacy of atoning blood. To the same effect it is said—“They are without fault before the throne of God.” On earth they were all fault together, and were wont to confess—“We have done the things which we ought not to have done, and we have left undone those things which we ought to have done, and there is no soundness in us.” But now they are without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing. Were their hearts exposed before you, you would find no evil thought, and no evil desire in them. Let all their acts be tested by that holy law by which on earth we acquire the knowledge of sin, and detect its presence, and they will be found even in its judgment “without fault.” This is the greatest marvel of their condition.

And this being accomplished, we are not surprised to read what follows:—“Therefore are they before the throne of God.” They are fit to be there. It can never cease to be condescension on the part of Infinitude to hold them in regard, but, being pure and spotless, it is no dishonour to him to allow them to stand in his presence. “They serve him day and night.” And for this constancy of service they have impulse sufficient in their renewed wills, and a strength that never wearies in their perfected minds. “He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them”—not as their enemy to chastise, or their Judge to frown upon them—but as their father to smile and their God to bless them. “They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living foun-

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tains of waters, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." Such are the perfected fruits of redemption.

IV. *In the Fourth place, we consider the praise which is offered to Christ on the ground of the redemption which he has wrought.* The very angels, with voices whose number is ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands, say, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them I heard, saying, blessing and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever." It is not the redeemed alone that say this—there can be no suspicion that grateful emotion exaggerates the benefit, or is too lavish of its praise. They that needed no redemption sing the praise of the Redeemer, as well as they who were redeemed by his blood, and the honours which they ascribe to him, and the praises which they carry with open hand to his footstool, are so high that there is no transcending them. Personal obligation often warps a man's judgment and imparts a glow to his utterances which the occasion does not warrant. But here they who could regard heaven as their birthright, and could say to its great Lord in the most perfect truth—"These many years do we serve thee, neither transgressed we at any time thy commandment," seem as if they would exhaust language in finding words wherein to utter the praises of him who accomplished a redemption of which they had such need. "We may follow them safely. They are good and impartial judges. While in a special note of our own we say, "Thou has redeemed us to God," we take up the echo of the angel's song, and say after them, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing."

There is no high quality manifested in the works of creation and providence, which does not shine forth more illustriously in the work of redemption. Do you speak of power? It is here in all its irresistible might, as well as there, though in other forms—not as there, creating globes of matter, endowing them with marvellous properties, subjecting them to unchanging laws, and sustaining their physical existence, but new-creating a moral world, restoring it to its pristine life and blessedness and purity, and upholding and perfecting its new-born spiritual energies. Do you speak of wisdom as manifested in the creation and government of the world? In the work of redemption you have the perfection of wisdom, and while you contemplate its length and breadth and gaze on its mysteries, you can only exclaim—"O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? for of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen." (Rom. xi. 33.) Do you speak of holiness and righteousness? The song of creation and the song of providence will both embrace these attributes in tones of varied praise. But the song of redemption will speak of them with a fulness and emphasis all its own. Both Sinai and Calvary will be summoned to bear witness that God is a holy and righteous God. The one great fact, that in order to the vindication of a righteous law, and the satisfaction of eternal justice, the Son of God became incarnate, and died for man's salvation, will be in heaven and for ever, the crowning evidence that God is light, and that in him is no darkness at all. Do you speak of goodness or love? Creation

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speaks of it, and providence speaks of it, and the singers of heaven are too large-minded, and too comprehensive of every thing which illustrates their God to overlook any of the signs of his love which are scattered profusely over the universe. But from all their excursions, though full of delight and joy, in search of creative and providential love, they will return for ever with growing delight to the theme of redemption. Eternal love was its primal source, unchanging love the only stimulus and inducement, through long ages, to persevere in the merciful undertaking, the purest love, its soul and essence. If challenged to declare the depth and height of the love of God, and to say what that love is capable of doing, they will find no answer more conclusive than an appeal to what he has done—"God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life." "When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly—God commendeth his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." And having told and celebrated this wondrous fact, there will not be one tongue in heaven unprepared to exclaim—"Verily, God is love?"

We wonder no more that they who see so much of God in redemption, as well as they who reap its ineffable blessings, sing with all the melody and rapture of the state of perfectness—"Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing."

And now in conclusion—the very idea of a song of *redemption* involves in it two great lessons.

1. It teaches us that we need redemption—a lesson which it might have been thought we would have learnt on earth, and not on earth merely, but in the secret depths of our own inward experience; but one which, coming even in the highest form, and in the most favourable circumstances, often passes away from the surface of our minds, with less impression than the morning cloud from the flinty rock on which it has rested a brief hour. It is not in vain then that the heavenly song sends us its solemn teaching on this subject. We are slow to learn that we need redemption. The conscious disorders of our minds tell us that we have fallen from a better estate. The faithful intimations of our consciences, in spite of the soothing and deceitful whispers of a love of sin, do tell us that we are guilty before God. It is written on our foreheads, in lines of anxious thought and care, that we need redemption. It is written in our souls, in letters of dark foreboding, that we need redemption. It is written in our lives, in our Adam-like endeavours, to hide ourselves from the gaze of an all-seeing God, that we need redemption. And if all this be not sufficient, it is sounded in our ears from heaven, that we need redemption.

This lesson, though taught in many forms, is hard to learn. But you must learn it if you would learn anything to purpose. You must learn it in your inmost soul, and confess it at the footstool of Divine mercy, and say—"Lord! save me, or I perish."

2. You are taught by this song of heaven—that *you are worth redeeming*. Not worthy of redemption—that we do not mean:—not deserving the blessings which are included in redemption,—that you are not. These blessings are all of grace, sovereign, abounding grace. But this, we mean, that your souls are infinitely precious. Christ adjudges every one of them of more value than a world. It was not to redeem things of no value that he died. He saw your spirits wrecked, and the yawning waves of a bottomless sea opening to engulf you: his heart was moved with pity, but no unreasoning impulse of compassion

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would have hurried him forward to the more than hazard, the certainty of a sacrificial death, to rescue you, had he judged your spirits of little price. Himself your maker, he knew your worth, and he reckoned you worth redeeming, though the ransom price must be his own most precious blood.

Some of you judge very differently. You think well enough of yourselves, no doubt. But it is in an evil sense. You think well enough of your own character, of your own virtues. You are not inclined to form a low estimate of your own righteousness. If you cannot boast of one virtue you will of another. If you know that you are chargeable with any vice, you think it is more than made up by some virtue. If you cannot lay claim to godliness, you *will* lay claim to humanity. But here Christ differs from you. Where you think well of yourselves, he thinks ill of you! The virtues of which you would fain boast, he sees to be but as filthy rags. His Spirit in his word hath concluded you all under sin, and hath declared that by the deeds of the law no flesh shall be justified before God.

But then, where you form a practically low estimate of yourselves, Christ has formed one that is awfully high. Many of you live in utter unconcern about your souls. You seem to think the body everything, and the soul nothing. How to live the animal life, costs you incessant thought and labour—how to attain spiritual and eternal life seems to cost you no anxiety. Were we to test your opinions by your practice, we should conclude that you consider the immortal part within you as a thing of utter nought, and not worth the toil or price of its redemption. Go to the cross, and you will see what Christ thought your spirits worth. Or listen, and they will tell you who sing Christ's praises in heaven. Be troubled, ye careless ones! All heaven being judges, there is within the mortal frame of every one of you an immortal gem, which the Son of God does not consider too dearly redeemed from death by the awful price of his own blood. Go and ponder this solemn fact—then return and tell us what you think of your own habit of neglecting or trifling with its eternal destinies!

We have now spoken, men and brethren, of the song of redemption. But shall we sing it in heaven? It will be sung by men of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation. It will be sung by the learned and the unlearned. It will be sung by the babe and the sire. They shall come from the east and the west, the north and the south, to join in its blessed melodies. The happy rivalry of heaven will be who will sing it in sweetest and loudest strains. Men of years will plead that the pardon of unnumbered actual transgressions places them under obligations that cannot be reckoned. And all the infants of all climes, infants no longer, but in memory of their infant redemption, will put in a plea of no small force, that theirs are the higher obligations, in that they were saved from the wormwood and gall of actual transgression. But amid all the voices of the better land that shall sing the song of redemption, shall yours be heard there? Yours, ye aged men and women, that are still without God? Yours, ye youths that prefer the pleasures of sin, which are only for a season, to the joys of God? Yours, whose God is mammon: Yours, whose God is Bacchus? Oh! no—"except ye all repent," and be reconciled to God. Your hearts have no sympathy with the praises of Immanuel, and your tongues shall not utter them in heaven, except your hearts learn to love them on earth.

Let the question go with us all to our homes, shall I sing the song of redemption in heaven? And may the Spirit of God enable us to answer it faithfully, that if we are now unfit to take up this high and holy theme, we may speedily learn its solemn and joyous strains. Amen.

THE COMMON SALVATION.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 14, 1851,
BY THE REV. WILLIAM BROCK,
AT EXETER HALL.

"The common salvation."—Jude 3.

SOLEMN and potentious, as I understand it, are these Sabbath services. All things considered, I know of nothing more calculated to stir up deep emotions than the scene in which we are assembled now. Whatever interest or importance there may attach to the preaching of the gospel elsewhere, we have all that, and then we have what elsewhere, I think, we could not find, either in respect to the number of the congregation, or to the circumstances under which we are convened. You might travel, my brethren, very far ere you would find yourselves in a position so suggestive as the present, of grave, serious, and ennobling thought. We are met here, not by hundreds, but by thousands; and we are met here, not in regard to secular, but in regard to spiritual things. There are gatherings in this Hall which relate to the gratification of the taste, and there are gatherings here which relate to the promotion of our philanthropy; but the present gathering stands related to the salvation of our souls; and of this, and such like gatherings, we shall certainly hear again; they have not terminated, nor will they terminate upon themselves. Ministers who have preached here, and people—dispersed far and wide, many of them now—who have listened here, will have to give an account severally of themselves to God; and as is the account so will be the award. If we who have preached here have been faithful, we shall have a blessing, and if you who have listened here have been faithful, you will have a blessing also; but woe betide both the unfaithful preacher and the unfaithful listener, in the day when God shall give us all the opportunity, and shall devolve upon us all the responsibility, of giving account of ourselves individually to him. Hence it is that we have so striven to preach that we might save both ourselves and them that hear us. Hence it is that we have been, with our heart's desire and prayer to God, betaking ourselves to his footstool for manifestations of his power, that thereby the word preached shall not be a savour of death unto death, but a savour of life unto life; and hence our resolution, taken the one with the other, that we would know nothing amongst you save Christ, and him crucified; and hence the selection of my topic to-night, so very expressively and emphatically brought out by the epithet—"the *common* salvation," to be proclaimed as in the fear of God, and in dependence upon the blessing which God has promised to vouchsafe in answer to his people's prayer.

Now let us with one accord—for I except nobody—give heed to "the common salvation." You observe the expressiveness of this epithet, it marks the universality of the aspect of the gospel, towards mankind, and the geniality, and the compassion, and the love of that aspect, beside. It seems to me, in two single words, to be the very echo of that great declaration which we have in the gospel according to John—"God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life." And so understanding it—and I think it may properly be so understood—let me ask you to harken to the exposition of it, which I may be enabled to present now.

"The common salvation"—

I. BECAUSE IT PROVIDES THAT WHICH MANKIND EVERYWHERE REQUIRE. The gospel of Jesus Christ is a common salvation, for it provides,

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I say, just that which mankind everywhere require. It may be rightfully said, I think that mankind are addicted to religion; by which I mean that the propensity to engage in worship, and to seek for help and succour from powers which are external to ourselves,—that that propensity is characteristic of man as man. I am quite aware that the operation of this propensity may be modified by circumstances. I quite grant, at once, that in some cases it is only after careful search that the operation of that propensity can be discovered, but I do think that it may be discovered nevertheless, and that it may be so discovered as to justify my position, that fitness for religious action is possessed by the human intellect, and that desire for religious action is felt by the human heart. How otherwise do you account for the fact that everywhere meet you, in some form or other, of religious service; it may be grotesque, it may be,—in comparison with the pure forms of our blessed Christianity, apparently outrageous; that does not alter my case at all. You will find some form or other of religion—rude and grotesque it may be—almost, if not certainly, everywhere. You will find, New Zealander Esquimaux, North American Indian; and if you go back to ancient Britain you will find it just the same—each nation has its own form of worshipping the Deity. You will find indications everywhere, that upon the interpositions of that Deity mankind rely.

Now the question will fairly come—what is to be assigned as the reason, if we assume this general religiousness in man, to what ought we to ascribe it? My answer is this—Man is religious because he cannot help it; he is religious from necessity; he wants that which naturally he does not possess, and without which he believes it cannot be well with him, either now or hereafter. He wants strength for his weakness; he wants light for his darkness; he wants pardon for his guiltiness; he wants to be assured that death is not annihilation, and that the sepulchre is not his home; and if atheism, in its full hardihood, were to inscribe—what was once inscribed over the gate of the great Parisian cemetery, “Death is an eternal sleep,” humanity would tear down the inscription, and trample it beneath its feet as a great lie, for humanity dreads annihilation, and wherever it may be found it will give indications of desire, that though it die, it may live again; it “groans and travails in pain together until now,” in search of that which it has lost, for the recovery of that, without which, it cannot be happy. Why else will you find men going upon pilgrimages, offering sacrifices, and enduring the heaviest self-denial? Why will you find, in almost every nation of antiquity, and in very many of modern nations, men willing to give even of the fruit of their body to secure the expiation of the sins of their soul. But not to go back to ancient nations, nor to modern nations, remote from us, let me ask why it is that men of our own community, and in our own neighbourhood, who have passed through life in utter ungodliness, will, when they come to die, invoke God's blessing, and ask others to invoke it on their behalf as well? Why will the worn out victim of sensuality summon to his dying bed, mitred or unmitred priest, to give him what he calls the sacrament? Why too, will the votary of ungodliness, when he can keep his wealth no longer, endow “religious houses,” and entail upon his property the charge of their support? Why is it, again and again that, at the midnight hour, myself, and ministers like myself, are summoned to the dying bed of some neighbour to—for it has been put to me like this—to “make a prayer over him,” before he actually expires, lest as he expires he should come beneath the wrath of God? Why all these things in ancient and in modern times, in one and another form? My brethren, the answer to all these interrogations, is just one and the same—men are exposed to danger, and their consciences tell them so. Men's relationships towards God are wrong, and they hope by all these appliances of one kind and another, to get them right. Men feel that the foundations are out, of course. The truth is—and I could find confirmation of it in the literature, the legislation, the philosophy, the superstitious—ah, and I would find it in the amusements of the various nations of the world—that men have lost their knowledge of the true God, and they have removed themselves consequently, from the enjoyment of God, and they have come, by an inevitable consequence, beneath the wrath of God; and it is this that accounts for the unhappiness of humanity. It is just as if one of

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the planets yonder were to get out of its orbit, everything would be wrong with which it came in contact. Man has gone astray from God ; and therefore do what he may, in any of his relationships and positions, he cannot but be wrong—"all have sinned," no matter what the country they inhabit ; no matter in the least what the moral excellency, by comparison, which they may present—"all have sinned," and that accounts for all the phenomena to which I have referred. It is humiliating, it is mortifying, but it is demonstrable nevertheless. It is repugnant, repulsive, and distasteful, albeit it is true, that there is no living man who has not sinned against God, and, therefore, that man is by his position and prospects altogether wrong.

Did you ever in your life conceive of such a spectacle as man presents. Look at him—he has a soul which longs for immortality, aye, which was fitted for immortality, and yet of immortality he knows nothing on which he can satisfactorily repose. He has a nature that was formed in the image of God. Look for that image, and what do you discover ? Nothing but the broken fragments of it, and those broken fragments utterly and absolutely defaced—in a single word, man's character is surcharged with anomalies, it is perfectly and altogether burdened with contradictions, and it is distracted with antagonisms, such as you can find nowhere else. He is lofty, yet grovelling ; mighty, yet mean ; he is daring, yet cowardly ; he will approximate at one time to that which is spiritual and divine, and at other times, alas ! he will approximate to the ignoble, the base, the material and the mean. You never in your life contemplated such a compound as is humanity, and that not humanity in other lands, lands of heathenism, but humanity in any man, and probably as much as in any case exactly in your own, that which now and then impels you towards heaven, and then that which perhaps at the very same time is binding you and fettering you to earth ; so that humanity everywhere is showing to us that it wants some common benefaction to rectify that which is wrong, and to supply that which has been lost. Well, look here, in the glorious gospel^{of} of the blessed God, you have just the common benefaction which humanity require. This, and not something else ; not this or something else, but this exclusively, and this alone. I care not what may have been the vagaries of human superstition ; I care not what may have been the forms of sin to which this uncontrolled, undirected religiousness, may have led ; I care not how signally legislation, and education, and civilization have failed, as fail they must. I should like for you all to mark that, in regard to certain things which are being said and done oftentimes now. Men talk of civilizing there, and educating here. Do it all, by all means, but remember that, despite of legislation, education, and civilization, there is a want in humanity which will never be provided for, and consequently, there is an element in regard to human society, which will be still unsupplied. Education, civilization, and this general religiousness, is all in vain, but Christianity provides just the remedy for every instance, for every case. "There is no other name under heaven given amongst men, whereby they can be saved," but that name, thank God, is given. "Other foundation can no man lay, but that is laid," but blessed be his name that it is laid, and whether a man be peasant or philosopher, tyrant or slave, Pagan or Mahomedan, nominally a Christian, or nominally a Jew, in the provision of this gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, there lies the provision for his want. You cannot modify it, you cannot improve it, you cannot touch it at all without spoiling it ; it is God's own provision for his own lost and wayward family. Wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption—all that humanity has been looking for, humanity may obtain—come here and at once universally enjoy. By that gospel, its aspirations may be satisfied ; by that gospel, its anomalies may be rectified ; by that gospel, its contaminations may be purified ; by that gospel its guiltiness may be pardoned, aye, and by that gospel its poor, trembled heart, groaning and travailing in pain, because it is so heavily burdened, may be comforted—aye, and by that gospel the poor heart of humanity may, at once and forthwith, be tranquillized, when it responds in the very spirit of adoption to the invitation—"Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." "The

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common salvation," for it is precisely that which the necessities of mankind require.

11. IT IS THE "COMMON SALVATION," BECAUSE YOU CAN COMMUNICATE IT TO MANKIND EVERYWHERE. I have spoken of various forms of religious service, and various modes of religious action ; now of many of them it may be said that they arose out of the necessities of some given district, and that they relate entirely and exclusively to the peculiarities of that district. If you were to take them from the district where they originated, you would find that many of their practices would be utterly impossible. The religion of the Hindoo, for example, is evidently a religion for Hindostan alone. The religion of the Egyptian is evidently a religion for Egypt, and the religion of Mahomet is evidently adapted for only certain regions of the earth. How, I ask, could the great feast of Mahomedanism, which absolutely requires in its adherents, total abstinence from sun rise to sun set, be attended to in those northern regions, where for many months the sun never rises, and then again for months never sits. You could not therefore take Mahomedanism where the Moravian took the gospel, it would not do, for you could not carry out its services nor insist upon its claims. And as with Mahomedanism, so with other systems of religion. Suppose you had taken a priest of the old Druids to the great Prairies of South America, there to establish his religion, he would have been utterly at sea ; he must have had the dark, ambush, and labyrinth of an entangled forest, the oak and the mistletoe, to execute the mystic rites of that religion. The high priest of the Parthenon too, had he been removed from the region of poetry and of song, and taken away from the neighbourhood of Parnassus or Olympus, he could not not have carried on that system which he professed to believe, and was devoted to establish. And so if some disciple of Buddha, Vishnu, or Bramah, were now to come to our country to convert us to his faith, he would be baffled instantly and irrecoverably, by the national, natural, conventional, and domestic differences between Great Britain and Hindostan. So that whatever you may say about these various religions, you cannot say that they were made for man, for I can tell you of regions of the earth where mankind are found, where they cannot be instituted, and where they cannot be carried on. But you cannot tell me of any region of earth where Christianity cannot be instituted ; the man does not live to whom it may not be preached, upon whom it may not be inculcated, and by whom it may not be forthwith enjoyed—simple in its nature, and spiritual in its requirements, and so far as its ritual is concerned—for you can scarcely call it a ritual at all—Divine in all its resources. The nation cannot be found under heaven to which it may not be sent. The government does not exist under which it will not survive. Peculiarities, geographical, local or national, cannot be found whereby it would be set at nought. I love to think of that, and I want you, too, to be filled with a holy satisfaction as you think of it likewise. There is not an empire or a nation upon earth, however tyrannical, but the gospel will go there—it would go there now so far as itself is concerned. But there are other nations who are idolaters ; could the gospel go there ? Yes, and so far as itself is concerned, it could go there now, and whilst it would assuredly correct the tyranny and abolish the idolatry, it would go on in the meantime saving men's souls, doing its own proper work, working from the particular to the general, securing in the first place man's deliverance from perdition, and then ultimately raising him from present evil and present woe. In the meanwhile Christianity will do all its proper work. It requires no aid from the civil power ; it assumes no position or rank among the authorities of the world ; it proclaims, wherever it goes, that it is not of this world ; and this is the very reason why it can go forth and occupy the world, in obedience to the commission of its divine Lord, inasmuch as its weapons are not carnal, and therefore it is that they are mighty through God. You and I may go anywhere, we want not to wait and ask for anything individually ; we may always depend on the blessing of him who is head over all things to his church. You and I may go and teach the rough-clad Huron amongst his ice-bound lakes, or you can go to the reclining, effeminate Asiatic, amid the fountains and odourific groves of his country—or you may go and travel with the pigmy Laplander, along the

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consolidated surface of his snow; or you may go to the sunny islands of the southern seas, passing from one to the other, doing precisely what Paul did at Philippi—"warning every man, teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus."

The gospel is its own pioneer; it wants nobody to go before it in the way of civilization, or to do anything of the sort, it just goes relying upon its own resources, telling its own tale, securing its own blessings, and through that which God has promised to vouchsafe, and which he perpetually does vouchsafe. I rejoice to think that if you could take me now, addressing you as I now am, in your mother tongue, and transport me to any group, or any individual of our common family, that barring the difficulty which would arise from the difference of language, I could just do there what I am doing here—I could take the same text, use the same arguments, and employ the same illustrations—and I am acquainted sufficiently with humanity to know that I should find a response in the hearts to which I addressed myself, and I should find, at once, there was there what the provisions of the gospel are designed to meet, and hence it would be shown to be "the common salvation." Everybody requires, and everybody may have it sent to them without any exception, whether of country, individual, or class; and therein I ask you to rejoice. It is the charter of man's salvation. It is just that which eternal wisdom and everlasting mercy devised; not for one, but for all; not for this country, but for every country—"Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel." I wish we had not that word here, but that instead it were written, preach *glad tidings* "to every creature;" and if they asked what the glad tidings are, the answer is—quoting the language of the angels—"Unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord"—"the common salvation." It is just that which humanity requires, and you cannot find humanity anywhere to whom that identical salvation may not be sent, and instantly, forthwith this Christianity would be at home, for it is "the common salvation."

It is "the common salvation"—

III. BECAUSE IT IS ADAPTED TO MANKIND EVERYWHERE. It is not only required by them, in the general, but it is adapted to them, severally, wherever they may be found. I speak not now of local and geographical peculiarities, but of those which are personal and peculiar to the individual. I need not pass from this congregation to prove that there are great peculiarities—personal peculiarities amongst the human family. What peculiarities there are, for example, in respect to constitutional temperament? One man is cheerful, so much so that some would say of him, that he is volatile and gay. His spirits bound onwards as though there were nothing to interrupt or overshadow them—bounding onward with all manner of agility and joyfulness, as though there were no occasion for lamentation or woe. Another man, on the contrary, is taciturn. It would be said of him, that he is gloomy or morose. His thoughts and emotions hardly ever reach the surface. He partakes naturally of the misanthrope. Others partake of each of these peculiarities in a manner which, perhaps, may be said to constitute the temperament we most admire. The gospel when brought to bear on these peculiarities, ministers impulse where it is required—it ministers equanimity where that is required, and strength where strength is required. It preserves cheerfulness from degenerating into levity, and seriousness from degenerating into gloom. How have I seen Christianity make the proud man humble, and the melancholy man cheerful! How have I seen it humanize the selfish man, and inspire those who seemed to be overclouded in gloominess, with the most cheerful joy! And how has it been enabled to accomplish this? It has reminded each individual that he should imitate Christ; and this leads each to the conclusion, "Well, I cannot imitate Christ, if I do not alter so and so." Therefore be the peculiarity of temperament whatever it may, the gospel regulates it, and assimilates it to itself, furnishing an adequate supply of whatever is wanting.

Again, what peculiarities there exist with respect to age! There are here present, young men and maidens, and those younger still, together with the aged. Thus there are great varieties in this respect; but no variety baffles "the common salvation." The young man needs to be reminded that the world is a great delusion, and to be kept under a constant, powerful, yet cheerful check, lest he put darkness for light, and light for darkness. The man of busi-

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ness needs to be reminded that this is not his rest. The man of three score years and ten needs to be succoured, comforted, and cheered by the consolations of the gospel. The desire of his eye has been cut off with a stroke, and he can sometimes hardly, even in appearance, seem to be resigned, to the will of God; but oh! this "common salvation!" It takes the young man and the maiden, and administers counsel and instruction to them. It takes the man of business, and is like a monitor at his very elbow on the exchange, bidding him not to forget the things which are unseen and eternal. And it goes to the old man's chamber, and makes all his bed in his sickness; and even to old age it pours in the oil of joy, and of consolation into his drooping and withered heart; it bids him—"Be not afraid, but only believe." It takes the child as from its mother's arms and commits it to the guardianship of Christ. It goes along with us through all the vicissitudes of this life; it never leaves us if we yield to its directions, till it places us by the Tree of Life, in the midst of the paradise God, and there bid us God-speed. "The common salvation!" Be our age what it may, we are here provided for. Look, for example, at Paul, the aged, and at his beloved Timothy, who was but a youth; and see them together "drawing water from the wells of salvation."

Yet again, there are peculiarities with respect to intellectual power. There are some men who are profoundly intellectual, and there are other men who are not profoundly intellectual. We know some who are investigating everything, and aiming to understand everything; and, at the same time, we know others who are well content to let almost all investigation alone. There is a very great variety of gradation between those two extremes; but mark! The proverbs, the parables, the doctrines, the invitations in this Book were made as much for the sage as they were for the rustic; and, engaged as men of the most opposite intellectual power may be upon the examination of it, I would defy anybody to tell whether the philosopher or the peasant were the most at home. The truth that instructed the "Dairymen's Daughter" was the very same truth that instructed the illustrious Newton. The themes on which Milton expatiated with such delight, were the very same to which the "Shepherd of Salisbury Plain" devoted his attention, and which afforded joy to his heart. Let all talented and untalented men come together to read this Book, and, to our mutual amazement, we should all be at home! There is just that which any child can understand, and that which the loftiest philosopher can understand too; and the latter does not understand it better than the former: there may be, with regard to philosophy and the evidences, much to which the child has not attained; but, in regard to the marrow of the gospel—in regard to that which constitutes its essence, and the belief of which is the crisis of salvation—whether he be peasant or philosopher, erudite or inerudite, here is a common portion for man as man, wherever he is found.

Then there is another peculiarity with regard to the degree of each person's criminality. All men have sinned, and, so far, sinned as to deserve and call forth the righteous anger of the great God; but I take it there are gradations of criminality; some men are worse than others; and therefore I speak specifically of the peculiarities of criminality. Some of you peradventure may know, men who are notorious for all that is profligate and profane. God only knows that there may not be some such persons in this very sanctuary at the present moment. There may be some parent here now whose heart is all but breaking as he thinks of some darling but disobedient and sinful child. There are here, perhaps, brothers who are calling to mind those who are "bone of their bone, and flesh of their flesh"—every one of you can think enough of the criminality of others; but let it be borne in mind that no peculiarity in this respect in any wise baffles the provisions of the gospel, or sets at nought the salvation which is by Jesus Christ. It is adapted to the profligate, the blasphemer, the dishonourable—to adopt the language of the Apostle Paul, it is adapted to the disobedient, the lawless, the ungodly, the unholy, the profane, manslayers, manstealers, whoremongers, liars, and perjured persons; and, if there be any other thing contrary to sound doctrine, of which man is guilty, this "common salvation" is adapted to that too—it is not adapted to encourage the wicked in his iniquity, or to teach him that he may live in sin that grace may abound—but it is adapted to bring him up from the degradation to which he has reduced himself, into the glorious liberty of the children of God. Point me to a young man beneath

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the heavens ! Direct me to any individual case with which you may be familiar, or of which possibly you may have heard—no matter the country he inhabits, the age he has attained, the guilt he has contracted, the evil he has done—only let him be my fellow-sinner, be he whom he may, be he what he may, be he where he may on the high road to perdition—I will go and stand fore-front with him, and preach the gospel to him, telling him there, and telling him then, that the blood of Jesus Christ can pardon *him*; that he is “able to save to the *uttermost*”—that his blood “cleanseth from *all sin*.” That which is as scarlet shall be as snow, and that which is red like crimson shall be made white as wool. This has been tested again and again, and the truths I advance have been proved. Oh ! my brethren, how many have we seen plucked as brands from the burning ! How many are there living now, and perhaps some of them are here to-night, to whom we could point and say—“See here the adaptation of salvation as it is in Christ !” It took them as they were, without asking for fitness, preparation, or postponement. It took them just as they were, and it made them all, (by the concurrent blessing of God the Holy Spirit) and made them all “new creatures in Christ Jesus.” “The *common salvation* ;” for it is adapted to every peculiarity of crime, of clime, of mind, of age, and of constitutional temperament; the man under the canopy of heaven could not be found for whom the gospel would not immediately and absolutely provide.

It is “the common salvation”—

IV. BECAUSE IT MAY BE PROFFERED TO ALL MANKIND, EVERYWHERE. I say, it may be *proffered* to all mankind, everywhere. So explicit are its declarations, so unrestricted are its invitations, that if we could address the entire family of men, 900,000,000 though they are—if it were possible that they could all be congregated, we would say to each individual—“Believe *thou* on the Lord Jesus Christ, and *thou* shalt be saved !” And if we could address that great multitude from out of the midst of our privileges, as the sons and daughters of the Lord God Almighty, when the heart is brimful of holy satisfaction, and when we feel, in our measure, what it is to be the heirs of God, and the joint heirs with Jesus Christ—even then, and in regard to these very privileges, we would say, None of you are excluded hence, “but those who do themselves exclude !” Earnestly, hopefully, unreservedly, unfeignedly, would I beseech them—man by man, to be reconciled to God; and if a bystander should interfere, and ask me to modify my invitation, and to qualify my appeal, I would say—No ! And if he urged me again to modify the one and to qualify the other, upon the ground of God’s sovereignty, I would say to him—“No ! my brother ; it is God’s own sovereignty which constitutes the ground of that appeal,” and with renewed ardour and redoubled earnestness, I would repeat that appeal and entreaty. Some might perhaps argue, that though this salvation is “*common*,” yet that I have not understood that word “*common*” properly, I would show to him what I have shown to you now—that I *have* understood it properly—that book itself being my judge. For example, it is written, “God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that *whosoever believeth on him* should not perish but have everlasting life.” Tell me where is the restriction there beyond that of the belief of the penitent man in Jesus Christ ? It is written again—“Come unto me *all ye* that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” Tell me where is the restriction there ? Further, it is written—“This is the will of him that sent me, that *every one* which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life, and I will raise him up at the last day.” Where is the restriction here ? Then it is written, again, “The Spirit and the Bride say come,”—this looks like integrity in the invitation—like honesty in the meaning and intention of him by whom the invitation is given—“the Spirit and the Bride say come, and let him that heareth say come, and let him that is athirst come, and *whosoever will* let him come, and take of the water of life *freely*.” Is there any restriction here ? Neither is there anywhere else. The light of heaven is unrestricted, and the light of the gospel is equally so.

Go where you may you are just to proclaim it to all men, indiscriminately, as I said I would do it, and as I say again, I would do it still; I would tell to every human being—“God has no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, but rather that he should turn from his wickedness and live.” I would tell him

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that "God is in Christ reconciling the world unto himself"—that Christ Jesus is "the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world;" and I would tell them, in the very language of this book, as I have done all along, that God "willett not that *any* should perish, but that all should come unto repentance;" and what I would do before the supposed multitude of all the earth, I would do before the actual multitude now assembled in this place. A salvation that would accomplish only by a substitutionary sacrifice of the Lamb of God—a sacrifice which is rendered personally efficacious to you and to me, by the mighty operations of the Spirit of God—I tell each individual here present, of that salvation, *you*—one and all—may take advantage, and that at this very hour! To *you*, I speak, I trust, with reverence, I call God to witness that no man here to-night need leave this Hall an unpardoned sinner! Now mark, learn, and inwardly digest that—*no man, nor woman, nor child, need leave this place an unpardoned sinner!* No reason exists, out of your own hearts, why you should not pass from darkness to light, from death unto life, from the power of Satan unto God. Submit yourselves to the righteousness of God, and the work of your acceptance with God would be done at once; and you cannot do anything in respect of this great work of acceptance with God, except just this submission to the righteousness of God. In other words, it is by just simply accepting the salvation which is in Jesus Christ, and you must receive it ere it can be a salvation to you. If any man here has been saying of this "common salvation," that it will save him whether or not—if any man here has been taking the universality of which I have been speaking, and applying it to the believer and the unbeliever, both alike—he is wrestling the scriptures to his own destruction. Light is common enough, but if your eyes are closed, it is of no avail; so too the gospel is free, but if you do not open the eyes of your hearts to receive it, its freeness will be of no avail.

It is not the work of a magical or miraculous agency, but of an ordinary process of your mind in the reception of truth, and in acting according to the dictates which that truth enjoins; but if you say (oh! the wretchedness of that perversity of ours which will pervert anything!) "If it comes to this we may as well go on in sin, for we shall be saved after all;" I say no—it will not save anybody except he comes and seeks for this righteousness which is in and through our Lord Jesus Christ. "Open, then!" You would say to a man whose eyes were closed, and who wanted to see,—"open your eyes!" With regard then to the gospel, I say unto you all—"Open your hearts and let him pour into those hearts the exceeding riches of his grace as shown towards you by the gift of Jesus Christ."

Why should you perish? There is no decree which insists on your perdition. Why should you not be saved? The Apostle writing to Timothy declares, that God wills that all men should be saved by coming to the knowledge of the truth. What hinders you from just setting out upon that course which shall land you in everlasting life?

"Let not conscience make you linger,
Nor of fitness fondly dream;
All the fitness he requireth,
Is to feel your need of him.

And I think I hear him saying to me—"Now tell them in my own words"—"Come, for all things are now ready!"

"Come, then, now while Christ inviteth,
Answer to his gracious call,
If you tarry till you're better,
You will never come at all.

Guilty, though you are, he'll save you,
Through the merits of his blood,
Venture on him, venture wholly,
Let no other trust intrude!"

And in the day that shall declare all things, it shall be declared then, this and that man were born here! "The common salvation!"

May God, of his infinite mercy, administer and apply it to your own hearts, for his name and mercy's sake. Amen.

THE RECEIVER OF SINNERS.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 21, 1851,

BY THE REV. R. HAMILTON,

AT EXETER HALL.

"This man receiveth sinners."—Luke xv. 2.

"It is right to be taught by an enemy," so said an ancient heathen poet, and so say we. Truth is not to be rejected, but is to be cordially received from whatever quarter it may come; and I need scarcely remind you who are acquainted with your Bibles that there are recorded here some interesting and important truths which were uttered by enemies of the Lord and of his anointed. You are oftentimes struck with the beauty and truthfulness of the sentiments uttered by a false Prophet, the prophet Balaam, when he said, "God is not a man that he should lie, nor the Son of man that he should repent; hath he said it and will he not do it; hath he spoken and will he not make it good?" You have discovered a depth of meaning in the utterances of the murderers of our Lord, which was unperceived by them when they tauntingly said, "He saved others, himself he cannot save." You concur in the truthfulness of the declaration made by him who is "the father of lies;" "a liar from the beginning," when he said, "skin for skin, yea all that a man hath will he give for his life." And I believe that there are not a few in this assembly who know, from their own personal and happy experience, that it is a truth that "this man," the man Christ Jesus, "receiveth sinners." They who uttered these words originally uttered them, as you will perceive, from the connection in which the text is found—in scorn and derision. Their object was to detract from Christ's dignity and to bring him into disrepute; but so far from detracting from his dignity, we regard it as his distinction, and as his glory, that he does receive sinners.

Examples are supplied to us of those whom he received and blessed during his residence upon earth. To a Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had cast seven devils, he said, "Thy sins be forgiven thee; go in peace." On another occasion, to the adulteress woman, who was brought to him in the temple, in answer to the statement which was made, that no man had condemned her, he said, "neither do I condemn thee, go and sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon thee." There is not a single instance which can be adduced of any one who came to Christ, however aggravated might have been his guilt, who was rejected by him. Even when he was suffering the death of the cross, and when any one might have supposed that his own sufferings would have absorbed his

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attention, he gave evidence of his willingness to receive sinners, when he said to the dying thief, "to-day shalt thou be with me in paradise."

But the question may arise, has Christ undergone no change by exaltation? We oftentimes find it the case that our fellow men, when exalted to situations of eminence, cease to act as they were wont to act towards their poorer brethren. It is so with men; but Christ has undergone no change by his exaltation: myriads have been received by him since the everlasting gates of heaven opened for his reception. There are thousands on their way to heaven now who have been received by Christ, and who have committed their best and dearest interests into his keeping. And we rejoice to stand in any assembly, as ministers of the everlasting gospel, and without any mental reservation, without the slightest hesitation, to say to all whom we may address, as we direct their thoughts to Christ—"this man receiveth sinners."

In directing your thoughts to these words now, we shall look—

- I. AT THE PURPOSES FOR WHICH CHRIST RECEIVES SINNERS.
- II. AT THE CONDITIONS UPON WHICH CHRIST RECEIVES SINNERS.
- III. AT THE MANNER IN WHICH HE RECEIVES SINNERS.

I. We shall look, then, first of all at THE PURPOSES FOR WHICH CHRIST RECEIVES SINNERS.

I might, in brief, answer, that he receives them for the purpose of doing for them all that which as sinners they need, which as sinners they can possibly desire; yea, "exceedingly abundantly, above all that they can either ask, or think." This, of course, implies that he is possessed of vast and infinite resources. And at the very outset of our observations, it is befitting that we should remind you that, whilst Christ is here and elsewhere designated, "a man," that he is something more than man. It is true that he was in reality a man, truly a man; but at the same time, he possessed the totality and fulness of the Godhead bodily. He is emphatically denominated, "the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person." And in his mediatorial capacity he has "all power given to him in heaven and in earth:" vast resources are at his command. But not only has he the ability to bless; he has also the tenderness and compassion which disposes him to bless—"this man receiveth sinners." He receiveth sinners, I observe,

1. To pardon their sins, and to insure their acceptance with God. It is very generally stated that we are sinners. All are ready to admit that it is so, that they are sinners; but oftentimes whilst there is this admission, it is evident that there is far from being anything like a scriptural conviction of the nature of sin. It is thought to be something for the commission of which men are more to be pitied than blamed. There is no distinct discovery of its enormity in the sight of a holy God. When, however, it is viewed in the light of his law, and in the light of the cross of Calvary, a far different impression is induced respecting it; it is then seen to be "that abominable thing which God hates;" that which exposes the sinner who commits it, and who does not repent of it, to "everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power." The inquiry, then, becomes one of personal importance—What must we do to be saved? How shall we secure the pardon of our sins? And it is when men are directed to the only remedy, when they discover that Christ is able and willing to pardon the very guiltiest sinner, who applies to him, and when they actually come to him, that they hear a voice which is more than human, saying, "I, even I, am he which blotteth out your transgressions, for my name

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sake." They hear the voice individually directed to them, son, daughter, be of good cheer, your sins are forgiven you. Such individuals are introduced into favour and acceptance with God, accepted through the beloved, and God looks upon them benignantly, affectionately, in Christ, and they are destined to be glorified in Him. How happy, how safe, and how secure are they whose sins are forgiven; and for this express purpose Christ is exalted, "that he might give repentance unto Israel and the remission of their sins." "This man receiveth sinners."

2. Christ receives sinners to sanctify and to cleanse their hearts. This is an object of the next importance to that to which we have already adverted. In fact, without the sanctification of the heart, our pardon of sin will prove of little avail, unless the tendency, the bias, to that which is evil be rooted out, a man carries with him in his own bosom the elements of his own misery.

Besides, it is utterly impossible that any individual can see God, unless he be pure in heart. Now, when sinners come to Christ, there is fulfilled in their happy experience the promise of ancient prophecy, "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean; from all your idols will I cleanse you; a new heart also will I give unto you." Perhaps tremblingly the sinner made that statement, "Lord, if thou wilt thou canst make me clean;" and then heard the merciful Saviour, saying, "I will, be thou clean." Thus it is that Christ fulfilleth the character he sustains, which his very name denotes—"thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins."

3. Christ receives sinners to supply all their wants upon the earth. What an unspeakable privilege and advantage would you deem it, were you a homeless, wandering outcast from society, pining in poverty and in want, to be received into the home of some earthly monarch. But what is this compared with being received by Jesus Christ? And I would observe, that they who are received by him have his care respecting even their temporal wants. He takes care of the body because of the invaluable treasure—the immortal spirit, which is lodged therein. But his chief care is respecting the immortal soul itself, and yet he does for all whom he receives, everything which they may expect from the offices and relationship he is represented as sustaining. Are men diseased? He proves "the great Physician of souls;" and they find that there is balm in Gilead, that there is a Physician there. Are they ignorant? Then he instructs their ignorance—and however numerous may be the Ushers in Christ's school, he superintends the whole of the instruction which is communicated to those who are received by him. Have they wandered from his fold? He is the great and the good Shepherd who receives them into his fold again—he gathers the lambs in his arms, and carries them in his bosom: he leads them into green pastures, and beside the still waters. Are they exposed to danger? He proves to them a hiding place from the wind, a covert from the tempest; the shadow of a great rock in a weary land. They have access to him every hour; and can, with the utmost confidence—which they do not possess in relation to the most intimate of their fellow creatures—communicate to him their inmost mind. "This man receiveth sinners."

4. Christ receives sinners that he may bring them to his glorious fellowship in heaven. This is the ultimate end which he has in view with respect to all his ransomed ones. He cannot rest satisfied until they are with him. He desires that they may drink with him of the new wine of the kingdom; and

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his prayer to his Father was, "I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory."

Now the thought of being with Christ, and of being received by him at last, hast oftentimes disarmed death of its terrors, and the grave of the gloom which must, otherwise, have surrounded it. It has induced desire in many a saint even to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better. It was the thought of being with Christ, of being received by him, that calmed the spirit of Stephen, the proto martyr, when he said, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." It is a solemn, and at the same time a delightful thought, that while I have been speaking, and while you have been hearing, many have had their first interview with the exalted Saviour. That blessed interview! How sweet to fall transported at his feet!

"Raised in his arms to view his face,
Through the full beamings of his grace."

Further, there is a public reception which is destined for all the faithful followers of Christ; a reception which will be given when all the holy dead shall awake, and all nations shall be cited to his bar, when the welcome shall be given—"Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." O, what a reception awaits those who are to be admitted to "many mansions" which Christ has gone to prepare for all his faithful followers.

II. Let us look at THE CONDITIONS UPON WHICH CHRIST RECEIVES SINNERS.

How may I insure the pardon of my sin? How may I insure the sanctification and cleansing of my heart? How may I insure that I shall be admitted, at length, to mansions of everlasting blessedness? In a word, the inquiry is being proposed by many of you, we trust, "What must we do to be saved?"

1. Now, I would observe first of all, that Christ receives sinners who answer to their names. It is sometimes supposed by inquiring penitents, that they could have much more confidence, if their names—their christian or surname, were found in the Inspired volume—that they could go to Christ in such a case with confidence. Now that would be far from satisfactory to our mind, and I am quite sure, on a more minute examination of the subject, that it would be far from satisfactory to your mind also. We should naturally suppose,—as the disposition is so strong with us to show an objection—that it was some other individual bearing the same christian name, and the same surname. But your name, and my name, is actually given in unmistakeable terms, far better than if christian or surname had been given—the name of SINNER! This is a name which every individual may appropriate to himself; and if even we designate ourselves *great* sinners, "it is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners," even the chief.

2. Then Christ receives those who renounce all self-dependence. There is a wonderful tendency in our minds to cling to something which we have done, to something which we suppose we can do, to something which we have felt, to something which we are anxious to feel, in order to secure our acceptance with God. Many suppose that they cannot secure such acceptance, because they do not feel a conviction of sin with sufficient pungency; because they have not the precise amount of conviction of guilt. Now I find no warrant in scripture for

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supposing that it is necessary to have a precise amount of conviction of guilt; and the man who says that a certain amount of conviction would warrant his coming to Christ, you may be sure wishes to take something as a price which shall secure his acceptance with God.

3. But a man must not only renounce self-dependence, there must be implicit reliance on the merits of our Lord Jesus Christ, as the only ground of a sinner's hope before God. In a word, they who receive him, do so, in all his offices of Prophet, Priest, and King. They renounce all their self-dependence: no longer go about to establish their own righteousness, but submit themselves to the righteousness which is of God, by faith, in Christ; and this is the mode of securing the salvation of the soul, of being received by Christ, which is adapted to men of every nation, to men of every tongue; and it matters not what may be the character which they have sustained—all plea and excuse is taken out of the way.

"While grace is offered to the rich,
The poor may take their share;
No mortal has a just pretence,
To perish in despair."

"This man receiveth sinners."

III. Let us now look at THE MANNER IN WHICH CHRIST RECEIVES SINNERS.

The reception given by man to his fellow man, is often such as to detract much from the value of it. Not unfrequently, we say, the gifts of earthly benefactors are bestowed in such a manner, as to detract much from their value. There are delays, and there is reluctance, in admitting to the enjoyments and favours which they confer. But there is a *grace* in the manner in which Christ receives sinners. The reception which Christ gives to sinners, is given promptly. This is the doctrine of the New Testament—so, at least, it appears to my own mind. The very moment a sinner comes to Christ, and believes on him, that very moment he is received by him, that very moment his guilt is cancelled; his person is justified, his soul is saved. It may, unhesitatingly, be affirmed, that his safety is as certain as that of the redeemed spirits around the throne of God.

"More happy, but not more secure,
The glorified spirits in heaven."

Now, there are many persons who suppose that Christ—if I may be allowed the expression,—is a great tantalizer, before he becomes a great saviour. They suppose that it is necessary to induce him to receive them, by their cries or tears; and that they are beforehand with him. It is not an uncommon thing to hear man speak—and professed ministers of the gospel too—of the necessity of waiting at the pool of gospel ordinances, until it be Christ's time to receive sinners. Let it be so, then we say that Christ's time is the time present; and that the sinner is never beforehand with him, but that he is always beforehand with the sinner. "Now is the accepted time, and *now* is the day of salvation."

2. Christ receives sinners tenderly. No upbraiding are uttered by him on account of their past conduct, and which to think of is fearful, but he receives them just as the father received the prodigal son, of whom we have read to-night. Suppose they occupy the place of a bruised reed? Then he does not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax. No trembling sinner

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ever resorted to his feet and was repelled ; for he has always a disposition to receive such with all cordiality.

3. Christ receives sinners joyfully. Reference is made in the chapter which we read of various occasions of joy—of joy in the bosom of the father who received his long-lost son, of joy in the case of the woman who swept the house diligently to find the piece of silver which she had lost—and these are strikingly emblematic of the joy which possess the Saviour's bosom when the sinner returns to God : when he looks at the misery he has averted, and at the happiness which he has induced, he rejoices over the sinner for his own sake ; and when he looks and sees of the travail of his soul, he is abundantly satisfied. “This man receiveth sinners.”

4. Christ receiveth sinners unweariedly. He has received thousands to his immediate presence and fellowship in heaven, and the inquiry might be made—is his disposition still to receive thousands more ? We rejoice to know that the applications cannot be too numerous, to warrant any apprehension of the hope of acceptance. You remember—those of you who are acquainted with the word of God, that Esther the queen had some hesitancy in going in to the king, under the impression that possibly the royal sceptre might not be extended towards her. Happily for us, we can none of us go to Christ and find that the royal sceptre is not extended towards us ; and as it respects character, it matters not to what extent a man may have gone in iniquity, what may be the degradation in which he is naturally sunk, if from thence, from the utmost regions of the earth, or from hell itself, they seek him, he will be found of them. No matter how far you may have wandered from him, he will be found of all who seek him ; and “him that cometh unto me,” is his own gracious assurance, “I will in no wise cast out.” O what a reception, brethren, is that which Christ is prepared to give to all who will comply with the conditions of heaven's mercy, and receive the gospel and all its blessings, on the only terms upon which these blessings can be bestowed. “This man receiveth sinners.”

What a contrast between the conduct of Christ and the conduct of men. There is a disposition on the part of men, especially of men of exalted station, to look down with contempt upon those who have been erring and wandering. Such was the disposition of the Scribes and Pharisees, as indicated in the text, taken in the connection in which it is found. Far otherwise was the conduct of Christ.

Let it be your aim to ascertain whether or not he has received you. It is sometimes supposed that it is a difficult, if not an impossible thing to determine what is the real state in which we stand. There is no impossibility in it. It only wants that men should use the honesty which it is their wont to display in matters bearing upon their temporal affairs. We can tell whether Christ has received us by ascertaining whether or not we have been convinced of sin. Certain I am that no man has tasted the sweetness of salvation who has not first been convinced of the bitterness of sin ; that no man has been saved who

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has not first been convinced that he was lost: you can then determine; and the importance of the matter is such as should lead you to determine whether or not you have a full conviction of your lost, ruined, and undone condition. Betake yourselves to him who has graciously said, "him that cometh unto me I will in nowise cast out." Could your closet walls become vocal, and have voice, would they bear testimony to the fact, that when no eye was present but the eye of him "who seeth in secret," you on bended knee, and with penitent and broken heart, have betaken yourselves to him who "came into the world to seek and to save that which was lost?" "This man receiveth sinners." He has received multitudes, but the question is still forcing itself; would that each one here would make it his own—have *I* been received by him?

If you have been received by him yourselves, what efforts are you making with a view to bring others to him? One of the most striking evidences to my own mind that a man has been received by Christ himself is, that he is heartily seeking to bring others to him. It is in accordance with the very nature of the gospel, when first it has been cordially received into a man's own heart, to draw forth his compassion towards the perishing and the lost. Andrew found Christ, and then went and sought for his brother Simon and brought him to Jesus. No sooner had the woman of Samaria conversed with Christ than she left her waterpot—forgetting the errand upon which she had gone to the well—and went to Sychar, saying, "Come, see a man that has told me all things that ever I did; is not this the Christ?"

O, brethren, this statement, this declaration, is one that should fill the world: we want that the world should know it. Point your fellow sinner, your fellow traveller to eternity, to the glorious truth that Christ receives sinners—tell him of "the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world."

But let me remind you in conclusion, that the day will arrive when Christ will not receive sinners. There is a world—God forbid that any now present should enter it—where no such tidings as this are ever communicated. The Master, as it respects them—solemn truth—hath risen up and hath shut too the door. It is in vain that they begin from without to say, "Lord, Lord, open unto us;" their destiny is irrevokably fixed: their doom is sealed.

"In that lone land of deep despair,
No Sabbath's heavenly rest doth rise;
No God regards their bitter prayer,
No Saviour calls them to the skies."

I rejoice that you are not beyond the land of probation, that hope with you is not ended, but that you are in a place of hope, and that the offers of mercy are held out to you, whatever may be the character which you have hitherto sustained. Whilst you see a Saul of Tarsus clinging to the cross, let none despair; whilst you look at the dying thief putting up the penitent and believing prayer,

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"Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom." Let the prayer be presented by you, Lord, now that thou art in thy kingdom, receive a trembling penitent, conscious of his own guilt and unworthiness, saying—

"Nothing in my hand I bring,
Simply to thy cross I cling."

O, I would that each individual present would take up the sentiments so beautifully expressed by one of our modern poets—

"Just as I am, without one plea,
But that thy blood was shed for me,
And that thou bid'st me come to thee,
O Lamb of God I come.

"Just as I am, and waiting not,
To cleanse my soul from one dark blot,
To thee whose blood can cleanse each spot,
O Lamb of God I come."

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The following Nos. of the Penny Pulpit contain Sermons delivered at Exeter Hall.

- 1,700, The Great Exhibition, by the Rev. T. Binney.
- 1,701, The Gift of God, by the Hon. and Rev. B. W. Noel, M.A.
- 1,705, The Prodigal's Return, by the Rev. W. Brock.
- 1,706, The City of Refuge, by the Rev. J. Beaumont, M.D.
- 1,710, The Truth, by the Rev. J. Aldis.
- 1,711, Wisdom's Invitation, by the Rev. G. Smith.
- 1,713, Looking to Christ, by the Rev. J. Hamilton, D.D.
- 1,714, Why will ye die? by the Rev. J. Stoughton.
- 1,717, The Gospel, by the Rev. Luke Tyerman.
- 1,718, The Testimonies of God, by the Rev. T. Archer, D.D.
- 1,720—21, The Book for all Nations, and all Times, by the Rev. J. C. Miller.
- 1,724, Salvation, by the Rev. G. Clayton.
- 1,725, The difficulties of speculative Inquiry, by the Rev. J. H. Hinton, A.M.
- 1,727, The Goodness and Love of God, by the Hon. & Rev. B. W. Noel, M.A.
- 1,728, The Final Judgment, by the Rev. John Burnet.
- 1,729, The Desire of all Nations, by the Rev. H. Cooke, D.D.
- 1,733, Witnessing to the Truth, by the Rev. C. Stovel.
- 1,735, Things Temporal, by the Rev. S. Martin.
- 1,738, The Hope of the Believer, by the Rev. W. Brock.
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(To be continued.)

GENUINE SORROW FOR SIN.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 21, 1851,

BY THE REV. W. CHALMERS, M.A.,

(Marylebone Presbyterian Church, Upper George Street, Edgware Road.)

AT EXETER HALL.

"And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications; and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn."—Zechariah xii. 10.

"In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness."—Zechariah xiii. 1.

THIS prophecy, doubtless, has special reference to the Jewish people, and points to a time that is yet to come—to that long-promised and long-looked for day, when the Jews, as a nation, shall be brought to repentance and the reception of Christ. But God's method in the salvation of every soul is substantially the same. He acts on settled principles in the kingdom of grace, as well as in the kingdom of nature. What is true, therefore, of the repenting Jew is also true of the repenting Gentile ; and the process here described is that which he pursues in the case of every particular revival of religion and every individual conversion to God. Wherever a sinner returns to him, and is forgiven, the same agency is employed : "the Spirit of grace and of supplications" is "poured" on him. The same object is contemplated by his mental eye : he "looks on the Saviour whom he has pierced." The same effect is produced upon his feelings : "he mourns and is in bitterness." And the same result is realized in his experience : he is washed in "the fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness."

Many interesting topics of discourse, therefore, are suggested by the texts. It is, however, to the origin of genuine sorrow for sin, and to its connection with forgiveness that we shall chiefly turn your thoughts ; as this origin and this connection are plainly brought before us in the words—"They shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and mourn." . . . "In that day," (in the day when they look and mourn,) "there shall be a fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness."

The words are those of Christ himself. None could speak them, but one who was both God and man. "I," says the speaker here—"I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications." And who can send that Spirit down from heaven, but the great God of heaven ? At whose disposal but Jehovah's can "the spirit of grace and supplications" be ? And yet the Being who thus pours forth the Spirit describes himself as having once been pierced—as possessing, therefore

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a far lower character than that of the Eternal God—as having been a creature—a vulnerable, mortal man. To none do both these features conjointly apply, but to the Lord Jesus Christ—“God manifest in the flesh”—a Being so transcendently high that he can give his Holy Spirit to whomsoever he pleases—a Being who descended once so low that the hands of wicked men could wound and pierce him ; nay, who was wounded, pierced, crucified, and slain. For as his lifeless body hung upon the accursed tree, “one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side ;” and it was done—the indignity was permitted, says the Evangelist, that this very scripture might be fulfilled—“They shall look on him whom they have pierced.”

I. FIRST THEN WE HAVE HERE THE OBJECT CONTEMPLATED BY ALL TRUE PENITENTS.

It is the Saviour pierced—the Saviour whom they have pierced. This is the sight which awakens in their breasts a genuine grief for sin, and then opens to their view the fountain of cleansing. This is the object seen, which first breaks the heart and then heals it. It is not Christ on his throne, so much as Christ on his cross—Jesus not exalted, but abased—a pierced Saviour—a bleeding, dying Lord.

There is nothing in such an object interesting or attractive to the carnal eye. On the contrary, it is viewed with indifference or aversion. True, so long as it is a mere picture or statue—canvass breathing under the pencil, or marble glowing under the chisel in some skilful artist’s hands—worldly men can love to look upon it. And so the “*Ecce Homo*,” of a Corregio, or the “Christ crucified,” of a Raffaelle, a Guido, or an Angelo, they can contemplate with a pensive admiration, which sentiment or superstition dignifies with the name of religion. But, as for the great reality itself—Christ our sacrifice—Christ crucified for us, Christ the Lamb of God taking away the sins of the world—they have no eyes to look upon, they have no heart to be moved by such a spectacle. Oh ! but when the “spirit of grace and of supplications” is outpoured—is sent by the very being who was pierced down into the heart of the sinner that pierced him, then the eyes once closed are opened, and the ears once deaf are unstopped ; and he hears a voice complaining as it were from the very cross—“Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by ? Behold and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow ;” and, on the instant the foot of the sinner is arrested by the thrilling sound, and his eye bent in the direction whence it comes ; and trembling, Moses-like, he says—“I will now turn aside and see this great sight !” Satan, indeed, would have him look on any other object in the world but this ; and hence, to turn away his eye from Christ, he sets before him statues, pictures ; telling him these are the substance, the other is but the shadow. Or, if that will not do, he bids the awakened sinner rather look upon himself, and tells him that in his amiable dispositions, and upright demeanour, and good intentions, and moral worth, he will find a far more pleasant and consoling sight. Or, if he will look out of and away from himself, then let him turn to holy men, and holy books, to sermons and sacraments and ceremonies, to fasts and tears and prayers, to penances and priestly absolutions ; if so be, by any or by all of these he may contrive, as with opiates, to lull to sleep again the conscience that has been aroused, or as with veils, to blind once more the eyes that have been opened ;

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lest "the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God should shine in unto him."

But when the Spirit of God is really at work on the human soul, he baffles all such devices of the adversary, and cuts off the sinner from all these refuges of lies ; and his eye he rivets upon Christ—a pierced Christ ; and on no other object will he suffer him to look but upon Christ—a pierced Christ ; and wherever he turns his steps, or bends his gaze, this is the prominent spectacle that meets his view, Christ—a pierced Christ ; and he cannot take his eyes off Christ—a pierced Christ ; according to the promise here—"I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications ; and they *shall* look upon me whom they have pierced." "Their minds which have so long been wandering from me they shall now fasten on me. What though they have hitherto disregarded, they shall now attentively consider—me. They shall make me the object of their closest contemplation and their most searching thoughts. They shall gaze on me with their mental eye, until that eye affects the heart."

And what is it that the awakened sinner, gazing thus, sees so arresting in the Saviour pierced ? I answer, first, his own unutterable sinfulness and appalling danger ; and next the amazing compassion and love of God.

First, he sees *his own unutterable sinfulness and appalling danger*. Once he thought nothing of sin, and he felt no burden in it. He could not see wherein its demerit lie, and he hardly apprehended any danger from it.. But now that the Spirit of God has turned his eye upon a pierced Christ, what a sight discloses itself to his view, and what a revolution do his judgment and his feelings undergo ! It is "the only begotten," and "well beloved of the Father," that he sees suspended on the accursed tree. It is sin, though not his own, which has fastened him to it, and subjects him to all that ignominy and anguish there. And such is the fierceness of the divine wrath against transgression, so intolerable is the load of suffering which he has to endure because of it, that though the pale sufferer there be none other than "the mighty God, the everlasting Father, and the Prince of peace," yet he is "poured out like water;" his "heart is melted like wax in the midst of his bowels;" "all his bones are out of joint;" "his sweat is as great drops of blood :" nay, his soul too is in travail and is wearied with the greatness of its way ; and unscored though it be by human hands, unbuffeted by mortal blows, not, like his body, crowned with thorns, or crucified by men—that mighty spirit writhes in unknown pangs, and, sinking, cries "My God ! my God ! why hast thou forsaken me?" and his head is bowed in dying agony, and he gives up the ghost. Oh ! now in looking on the Saviour pierced, he sees as he never saw before, that "the Lord is a jealous God," and that "sin is the abominable thing which he hates." He sees, that he is resolved, at all hazards, and whatever suffering it may occasion, to visit sin with condign punishment and to vindicate his outraged law. Now, from his inmost soul, the awakened sinner feels that the guilt of sin must be terrible when Jehovah "spared not his own Son," who but became answerable for it ; and that its load must be infinite, when, laid upon Omnipotence incarnate, it had power to sink him down into the dust of death. Now, in the cross of Christ, there stands out to his view that which he never saw before, a monument the most

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awful of heaven's justice—a memorial the most solemn of human guilt. And he infers with the quickness of intuition that if God spared not, but so tremendously punished sin when but imputed to his Son, vain are the hopes of his escape when that sin is his own act and deed. From that cross there rings in his ear a voice which says—“Thou art but a worm: how couldst thou bear this wrath?” “Can thine heart endure, and thine hands be strong in the day that he shall deal with thee?” And such a day of reckoning he anticipates, with trembling, for now he sees, too, the share which his own personal transgressions had in the sufferings and death of the Son of God. “They shall look on me,” says the prophecy, “whom they have pierced;” and in the pierced Saviour every awakened sinner beholds a Saviour pierced by him. Yes, brethren, it was not so much the poor heathen soldier who pierced the Lord as it was our sins that pierced him. They were “laid upon him.” “Though he knew no sin, he was made sin for us;” and, therefore, it “pleased the Father to bruise him and to put him to grief.” Herod, Pilate, the unbelieving Jews, the Roman soldiers—those were only the instruments in the hands of Divine justice. It was *our* sins that unsheathed the sword and directed every blow. These, these were the nails—the thorns—the spears that pierced him. He “bore our sins in his own body on the tree.” We, guilty men and women, it was that slew him. And every true penitent perceives this to be the case. He regards his Lord as not only *pierced*, but *pierced by him*. Whoever were the instruments, his own countless sins he sees to have been the real cause of the Saviour’s death, and every moment of his subsequent impenitence, unbelief, and rebellion, he feels to have been a consenting to the deed. And so, as he climbs the steep ascent of Calvary, and stands at the foot of the blood-stained tree, and gazes on the lifeless Jesus extended there, his body besmeared with dust and gore, and showing many a ghastly, gaping wound, he comes to realize his own blood guiltiness in the scene, and trembles at his partnership in that fearful crime.

“Who, who, my Saviour! this hath done?
Who could thy sacred body wound?
No guilt thy spotless heart hath known;
No guile hath in thy lips been found.

I, I, alone have done the deed;
‘Tis I thy sacred flesh have torn.
My sins have caused thee, Lord, to bleed;
Pointed the spear and fixed the thorn.”

And this it is which fills the awakened sinner with the most alarming apprehensions of his guilt and danger. It is not only of rebellion against the righteous law of God that he stands accused; it is not only with having dishonoured the great and glorious Jehovah that he is charged; it is with having consented to the death, and imbrued his hands in the blood of the Son of God himself. Oh! the enormous guilt of sin; he says, when it could bring the King of glory down so low! Oh! the enormous burden of *my* transgressions when it is the Incarnate God whom they have crucified and slain! On, the brink of what fearful ruin, of what a flaming hell do I stand!

But, secondly, in a pierced Christ, the arresting sight, which the awakened sinner sees, is—not only his own fearful guilt and appalling danger; it is

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also, *the amazing love of God and the fulness and freeness of Divine mercy*. For not only does he behold the Saviour pierced by him, but, as he looks again he sees that Saviour pierced for him ; “wounded for his transgressions, bruised for his iniquities ;” enduring all that woe and suffering in his place ; pouring out his life for his salvation ; redeeming him from the curse, being “made a curse for him ;” dying “the just for the unjust, that he might bring him to God.” And what a sight is this ! In that cross of Christ to behold the most powerful, the most impressive demonstration of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment—a sight fitted to alarm every sleeping sinner, to arouse every slumbering conscience, to stir into agitation and tumult every listless and impenitent heart ! In that cross to behold also the great propitiation—the amazing gift of God—the everlasting counsel of peace—the unsearchable riches of Divine mercy—the unutterable love of heaven ! No marvel that Calvary with all its terrors should fascinate the awakened sinner’s eye ! What though that awful cross, dear brethren, breaks up my false security—tears from me every rag by which I would seek to cover my shame—drives me from every refuge to which I would repair—brings home to my conscience the most alarming conviction of sin and danger, and shuts me up to the conclusion, that, as a sinner I stand exposed to the righteous indignation and the infinite wrath of an offended God—yet, when I look again upon that cross, from the midst of the darkness that surrounds it, and the fearful manifestations of Divine vengeance against sin that encompass the sufferer upon it, there breaks forth a light, glorious as the sun shining in his strength. It is the “Sun of Righteousness” arising with healing in his beams ; it is the effulgent light of God’s love ; the glorious manifestation of God’s grace and mercy ; for “God so loved the world as to give his only begotten Son ;” and that Son of his, in his self-denying, self-sacrificing love is dying for me. I gaze on the cross, and there I see, that notwithstanding all my provocations, and all my guilt, I am still the object of Divine solicitude and regard—that Jehovah yearns over me with exquisite tenderness—that he longs to rescue me from my guilt and ruin—that his love to me is such as no heart can measure, and no unworthiness alienate, and no sacrifices repress. I gaze upon the cross, and there I see that he who is extended on it in weakness and in agony, but stretches forth the arms of his love that he may clasp me in his warm embrace and press me to the very bosom which I have pierced. And that sad countenance—that drooping head—they do but look down upon me from the cross to melt me into contrition—to invite and to draw me near that I may live. Here is a spectacle which nature in all her wide spread glory cannot unfold ; and which providence with all its marvels cannot furnish. This is the mighty spell with which the Holy Spirit arrests the awakened soul, and thaws the frozen heart, and unseals the fountain of the sinner’s tears.

II. THIS LEADS US, SECONDLY, TO THE EFFECT WHICH THIS SIGHT IS SAID TO PRODUCE ON THOSE WHO BEHOLD IT :—“They shall look on me whom they have pierced, and mourn and be in bitterness.” The sight then of a pierced Saviour gives birth to a deep and pungent sorrow, and a holy lamentation for him, in all who behold it.

Brethren, there is a sorrow for sin, which is of no earthly value, and which

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says and does no more in regard to our salvation than does a cloud passing over the sun, or a troubled dream of the night. It is not the work of the Spirit of God; and it has no reference at all to Christ. It is the work of natural conscience, roused from its slumber, sitting as a judge and an avenger in the sinner's heart, and filling it with self-condemnation, horror, remorse, and shame. Sin, and a sense of sin may be the occasion of it; but it is not so much sorrow for sin as for its consequences. It springs not so much from a feeling of its vileness as from a dread of its punishment. Such was the sorrow of Esau when deprived by his sin of temporal blessings; such was the sorrow of Ahab when exposed by his sin to temporal judgment; such was the sorrow of Cain when excluded by his sin from mercy; such was the sorrow of Judas when dismayed at his inevitable doom. Such a sorrow hardens the heart against God; encasing it in deeper obduracy. It is the sorrow of the world, working death. From such sorrow, good Lord, deliver us! But the sorrow that is produced by looking upon a pierced Saviour is of a very different kind. It is indeed connected with an awakening of the conscience, an alarm in the soul, a conviction of guilt, an apprehension of danger—and this perhaps is all, so long as in the cross of Christ the awakened sinner only sees the holiness of God, and his inflexible determination to punish sin. But when he sees also in that cross the wondrous love of God to sinners, and is assured that the Saviour pierced and wounded there was pierced and wounded *for him*—then does he “sorrow after a godly sort”—then does his sorrow spring far less from a dread of the consequences of sin than from a feeling of its baseness and pollution; because the man now perceives it to be intrinsically loathsome and hateful—an offence alike against infinite majesty, incomprehensible purity, unsearchable grace. Yes, brethren, he “looks on him whom he has pierced and mourns *for him*.” In such a sorrow as this there is love to the Being offended as well as fear of the punishment of the offence. The sorrow of the awakened sinner has reference mainly to Christ—to God in Christ. It flows forth deep, it flows forth strong, when he thinks of the ingratitude, and injury, and insult he has offered by each offence to his first and kindest, and most constant benefactor—to his best, and warmest, and most disinterested, and devoted friend. Now with David he can say,—“Against thee only have I sinned”—against thee, my Redeemer and my Saviour, my Lord and my God.

Brethren, learn here a deeply important truth. It is—that a great part of genuine repentance—“repentance unto life”—springs from a discovery, such as the Spirit of God alone can make, of the Divine love to us in the gift and sacrifice of Christ. It is the hope, the sense of God's love, that alone bends and melts the hard and stony heart; and never is the sinner truly contrite till he looks on the crucified Saviour, and says—“He loved *me*, and gave himself *for me!*” Your repentance may, and it often does, begin with that knowledge of sin which “the commandment” gives; but if true, if heaven wrought, it will advance to that softening grief which flows only from a believing sight of a *pierced Saviour*—from a knowledge and persuasion of Divine power and faithfulness, and love, waiting, notwithstanding all your provocations, to save and to bless you. It is the view of Bethlehem, Gethsemane, Calvary—of all Christ's wondrous work, and matchless grace, that really subdues the stubborn spirit, and dissolves the soul in ingenuous grief. “The tear of saving repentance,” it has been well said, “drops from the eye of faith; and faith, while it weeps, stands at the foot of the cross.” The law may convince you of sin; but the gospel it is that will teach you to abhor it. The law can instruct you in your duty; but it is the mercy of the gospel which wounds and affects the soul for the breach of it. The law thunders in your ears the threatenings of God against transgressors, and makes you tremble; but it is a crucified Saviour who shews you the actual measure of punishment you have deserved, and makes you “mourn.” The law discovers your malady, but leaves you under the power of it; the gospel searches the disease more deeply, and then brings the cure. Hence the repentance which the law alone produces, is a slavish fear, a sorrow—death-working, and soul-destroying; but that which is the operation of the Holy Spirit, sent down

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by Christ, though blended with fear, is produced by the instrumentality of faith, and mainly springs from a steadfast belief in the promises of the gospel, and an overpowering view of the love of God in Christ.

Yes, brethren, it is the sight of Christ dying for my sins which makes me not only "mourn," but "be in bitterness" for him. This confounds my guilty heart ; this leads me to "repent in dust and ashes;" this covers me with "shame and confusion of face," and makes me feel that it is an evil, and a bitter thing to sin against God. And every fresh view I take of the cross, while I cherish the hope of mercy, deepens my emotions of sorrow and convictions of the evil of sin. Nothing is more natural, nothing more reasonable than that it should do so. How can I ever forgive myself for exposing so great, so high, so gracious, so divine a Being, to ignominy and death, by my sins ? How can I fail to be wounded to the quick, when I contemplate in that pierced Saviour, at once, the work of my own guilty hands, and the proof of his unutterable love to me ? How can I but be humbled in the very dust when I think of all my subsequent impenitence, and ingratitude, and rebellion and contrast with it the rich, free mercy, still extended to me by a much injured, and yet redeeming God ? How can I but remember and be confounded, and never open my mouth any more, because of my shame, when in the very cross which shows me my guilt and my desert, I see that God is pacified towards me for all that I have done ?

III. OBSERVE, BRIEFLY, IN THE THIRD PLACE, THE RESULT OF SUCH A SIGHT OF CHRIST, AND OF THE SORROW TO WHICH IT LEADS.

"In that day there shall be a fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness." The fountain is none other than the precious blood of God's dear Son, shed as a propitiation for sin ; which, just as water removes uncleanness from the body, so cleanses us from all sin, and takes away the guilt of the soul. And "in that day" it is opened,—when men, looking to a pierced Saviour, are filled with genuine sorrow, mourn, and are in bitterness for sin.

That fountain was opened, indeed, when the sword of Jehovah smote his incarnate Son, and the nails pierced his hands and his feet, and the spear his side, and his precious blood was actually poured forth, and his soul made an offering for sin. But by the opening of the fountain here, I take it, we are rather to understand its discovery—not the first bursting forth of its stream, but the sinner's first beholding it, the sinner's first becoming acquainted with it. Men often long hear of the salvation through the blood of Christ ; but they are not saved by it. Why ? Because they do not see, they do not understand, they do not appreciate it. "Their eyes are holden, that they cannot see it." It is therefore to them a hidden salvation. It is to them a sealed fountain. Their ignorance, their impenitence, their enmity of heart to God, and holiness, their love of sin and of the world, conceal that fountain from their eyes, and make them insensible to its value. But in the day when "the spirit of grace and of supplications" is outpoured, they look on a pierced Saviour, and mourn for sin, and are in bitterness ; and in *that day* is the fountain opened. They see, in the blood of Christ, a salvation provided for them, a salvation open to them, and with joyful hearts they accept it ; they wash in that fountain, and are cleansed.

Here, brethren, we have another deeply important truth ; and it is—that genuine sorrow for sin is the path-way to a saving knowledge of Christ. Why do thousands hear of the remedy which the gospel provides for wretchedness, pollution, guilt, and yet know nothing of it ?—nothing of its power to cleanse, nothing of its power to comfort the soul. Why, just because they have never felt their need of it. They have never discovered their enormous guilt, or their unutterable vileness as transgressors of God's law. That is the reason why, in Christ crucified, they have never seen a Saviour for their guilty souls. Is it so, dear friends, with any of you ? Is it so—that you have never yet seen, or understood, or embraced the salvation of the gospel ? The reason is plain. You have never yet been true penitents. This fountain has never yet been disclosed to your view, because you have not yet discovered your need of it, or learned its worth. You would embrace the gospel now if you felt your need of it. Were you penetrated with true contrition for sin, that sense of

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sin would show you the Saviour from it ; and you would be converted at this very hour. Oh ! then, learn here the value of genuine repentance, of a deep conviction of your sinfulness, and of great sorrow of heart on account of it. In itself, indeed, repentance can do nothing for you. It can do no more to pardon or save your souls, than the tears and the tremblings of a convicted criminal can cancel his sentence, or obliterate the memory of his crime. But, then, God will never save you without it ; and the gospel you will never understand till you possess it. God breaks before he binds ; he smites and wounds before he heals the soul. But wherever there is real penitence, the fountain is disclosed, the remedy is gladly embraced, indifference is discarded, prejudice flees away, “enmity is slain.” What things were gain before, are counted loss for Christ, and the knowledge of him becomes the excellency of all knowledge. Ah, that is the reason why some of you complain, it may be, that you have no comfort in the gospel. Brethren, you have had no misery in your sins. Seek then, a deeper conviction of them, and a more heartfelt, abiding sorrow on account of them. Alas ! how little do we all know of true contrition, and that heartfelt, painful, yet tender and softening grief, which the prophet here describes ! With the vast majority of those who call themselves, who acknowledge themselves to be transgressors, no abiding consciousness of their guilt disturbs their thoughts. Their confessions of sin are little more than words of course. The misery of it they never feel. On the contrary, it is linked with all their ideas of happiness. So far from feeling it to be a bitter thing, they roll it as a sweet morsel under their tongue ; and so far from retiring to weep in secret for it—that would be to make themselves the companions of fools ! How different is the estimate which the text puts upon genuine sorrow ! See how lofty a place is assigned to it here ! It is the gift of God. It is the work of his Spirit—the Spirit sent down from heaven into a guilty world, to accomplish it. And before it can be produced, we must be taught to look on him whom our sins have pierced. Christ must exhibit himself to us, not in his present glory, but in his bygone humiliation—not crowned with honour, but defaced with shame.

Oh ! beware then of making light of this sorrow, and striving to get rid of it when it knocks for admission into your hearts. Strive rather earnestly to attain it. Throw open every door and every avenue of your spirits, that it may enter there. It is indeed a bitter thing. There comes with it, often, many a tear and pang ; but yet it is not opposed to happiness. There is a peace, a joy connected with it that is satisfying and exalting. “Blessed,” says God, “are they that mourn,” and he has not blessed them in vain. And see too, where, if you would have this blessing, where you must seek it ? You must seek it from him who now is exalted as “a Prince and a Saviour” to bestow it. You must approach the throne of grace, and there with all the energy of your souls, implore it at his hands ; beseeching Christ to reveal himself to you, to give you a true and realizing faith in him, to fasten your eyes upon him by the Spirit of his grace, and to cause you to feel the guilt of those sins which crucified him, and to make you mourn.

Brethren, if this were done for you—oh ! how blessed would you be ! This sorrow for sin would not indeed make you more welcome to Christ’s mercy ; for your warrant to lay hold of that mercy, it must ever be remembered, lies not in your repentance, or in any act or exercise of yours. It lies not in the fact of your being convinced, or humbled, or penitent. Your warrant to lay hold of that mercy lies in this fact alone—that God is willing freely to bestow it. But while a sense of need will not make you *more welcome* to that mercy, it will make that mercy *more welcome* to you. It will make it ten-fold more precious in your eye, and more sweet in your experience ; it will impart a life, and a power, and a reality to your religion, such as it never knew before. It will give a warmth to your love, and a fervour to your self-consecration, such as to make you “new creatures.” Ay ! and it will bring satisfying enjoyment, and unspeakable blessedness with it ; for “they that sow in tears shall reap in joy.” “He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless return rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.”

May God command his blessing on what has been spoken in his name ! Amen.

THE LOVELINESS OF JESUS.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 28, 1851,

BY THE REV. J. H. HINTON, M.A.,

AT EXETER HALL.

"Thy name is as ointment poured forth."—Song of Solomon i. 3.

A LARGE part of the beauty of the Bible lies in the multitude and variety of its metaphors. In this respect the book has no parallel. We are far, however, from doing equal justice to this body of noble and glorious metaphors. Some of them, being derived from aspects of nature, speak the same language in all ages, and to all people; and are in all circumstances equally well understood, and equally deeply felt: some of them, on the other hand, derived from customs and usages of society, are not in all ages, and in all countries, equally eloquent; since the usages of society not only differ at the same eras in different countries, but differ in the same countries at different eras. Of this latter class of metaphors is that employed in the text, when it is said that the name of Jesus—for that is the name I speak of—"is as ointment poured forth."

Now, according to our usages, there is nothing very agreeable in "ointment poured forth." It is needful for us to recollect, that even the meaning of words in our own language changes, and that by "ointment," as the word is used in scripture, we are generally, if not in all cases, to understand perfume. We have in one place a scriptural expression to this effect, "Ointment prepared according to the art of the apothecary," which intimates to us that perfumes came into use through a medicinal channel; that they were not, in their origin, so distinct as they are now from medicinal preparations. Instead of speaking now of "ointment prepared according to the art of the apothecary," we have to speak of perfume prepared according to the art of the perfumer. You will recollect the various references to the use of perfumery in the Old Testament. "A good name is better than precious ointment." "Let thy garments be always white; and let thy head lack no ointment." Costly perfumes are enumerated among the royal treasures of king Hezekiah. In the New Testament too, you remember the cases in which an alabaster box of precious ointment—costly perfume, which in one instance cost some six or seven guineas—was opened, and poured upon the person of the blessed Redeemer.

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Now in ancient times, beyond doubt, more perfumery was used than is used now : but in Eastern and tropical countries a great deal of perfumery is used yet ; and it is used very largely in the form in which some of us may remember our grandfathers using it, namely, in the form of scented pomatum for the head. We now prefer, those who like perfumes at all, a liquid perfume, but even this is not general in English society ; so that the metaphor here employed passes away without our enjoyment of it to the extent to which it is intended for illustration. What we need then to do is to quicken our imagination into exercise, and to recollect that there is one of the senses to which perfume is agreeable. The meaning is this ; that, as perfume is pleasing to the sense, so the name of Jesus is, or ought to be, fragrant to the heart. [The name of Jesus is, or should be, "as ointment poured forth ;" and this for three reasons :—

I. ON ACCOUNT OF THE EXCELLENCE OF HIS PERSON ;

II. ON ACCOUNT OF THE PERFECTION OF HIS WORK ;

III. ON ACCOUNT OF THE ARDOUR OF HIS LOVE. These are the three heads of my discourse.

I. I say in the first place, that the name of Jesus should be "as ointment poured forth" BECAUSE OF THE EXCELLENCE OF HIS PERSON.

Now there are three points of view in which the person of our Lord Jesus Christ may be regarded.

1. *As man.* Not as some have held, a phantom, an appearance of man without reality ; but man, strictly speaking, just as ourselves in body and in soul, uncontaminated purity excepted, which distinguished him. Well, a man is an object common enough, and very often degraded and hideous enough. In the person of Jesus, however, we see a lovely specimen of our humanity ; an eminently amiable, pure, dignified, benevolent man : the sort of man it is a luxury indeed to look at. But that is not all. You see in the person of the Redeemer, a man not only of extreme variety, but of absolute singularity. There was, in the age in which he lived, no such man in existence. There was in this world such a man in existence once, but only once, and only one, and that for a short period—that was our first parent before he sinned ; and from that time till the appearance of Jesus Christ in this world, was there never man in it of whom it could be said, as it was said of him—"in him was no sin." There was the absolute perfection of human nature appearing again in the midst of a corrupt world, without partaking of its corruption : once more, and but once, and but in one case. A man without sin—with all the lovely attributes of human nature, in the beauty of each, and the combined beauty of the whole. A man, so to speak, to be put into a museum.

2. We view the person of our Lord Jesus Christ not merely as man, but as God. As I said he was strictly man, so I say he was really God. Not, as was infelicitously said by a distinguished writer some years ago, "deified humanity." His humanity was simple humanity, not deified ; but his person was also God, simply, strictly, really God—the Divine nature ; the second

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Person of the Divine and ever glorious Trinity. Now how remarkable a thing is this. We have before us in the person of Jesus Christ, God. In the heavens and the earth, and everywhere around us, we have the work of God ; something that God has made indirectly expressive of himself ; but here stands the only and unique being, of whom it can be said, he is God. He is isolated, therefore, by a vast and infinite distance, from every other being or object in the universe. He presented God to us in a truly marvellous aspect. Generally speaking, God is conceived of by us—to whatever extent we can conceive of him—as a being infinite, filling all things, having no limited, because he has a universal, presence : but here God is reduced from the infinite to the finite, to a limited presence and a local residence ; so as God was never seen before, nor shall be again. Our conceptions of God are made indefinite, often to a painful degree, by the intangible vastness which we are obliged to endeavour to attach to his character. We feel the want of some medium of perception adapted to the realization of his being. He cannot be seen, he cannot be handled, he cannot be traced in visible action ; but in Jesus Christ God is withdrawn from these impediments to our apprehension of him. There is God as he can be seen ; God, in his benign and glorious attributes, appearing in the human countenance, appreciable to our own eye. There is God as he can be heard, uttering his inmost thoughts in the sounds and tones of our own language ; God, as it were, translated for us into a tongue that we can read. There is God in action, so that we can trace him : see him raise the dead, command the storm, feed the hungry, open the eyes of the blind. God, verily, as God never was seen before in this world, never but that once, in the man, Christ Jesus.

3. We regard the person of our Saviour as presenting to us not only in one aspect man, and in another God, but as presenting to us these two natures, or elements, in combination. Jesus Christ is *God and man in one person*. Not the two natures divided, so that each might act separately, or one at a time ; but the two natures blended, so that they are fitted to act together in unison, in sympathy. I do not know, and I do not pretend to know, how to explain this matter ; but my firm belief is, according to the scripture, as I believe and understand it, that, as truly as the body and soul form one person in man, so truly the divine nature and the human nature form one person in Immanuel.

Now mark what we have here : God and man in one person, the human and the Divine, with one consciousness, with one memory, with one feeling ; thinking together, feeling together, uttering their common thoughts by a common vehicle. O the thought that is common to the heart of man and to the heart of God ; the two natures in unison, so strange, so beautiful. Verily the name of Jesus should be “as ointment poured forth.” “He is the chief among ten thousand ; the altogether lovely.” Here is man in intimate connection with the Deity, and yet human nature is unconsumed ; here is God blended with the feeble nature of man, and yet undegraded.

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II. I said that the name of Jesus should be "as ointment poured forth," ON ACCOUNT OF THE PERFECTION OF HIS WORK.

Now there are three aspects in which the work of our Lord Jesus Christ may be regarded. I look at it—

1. *As a work of mediation.* I see God and man severed by a vast chasm. Once united, when both were holy ; but widely separated indeed, since men have become corrupt, and God retains his purity. The corruption of man is such, and such the purity of God, that there can be on his part, consistently with his purity, no gracious communication with man of a direct kind. If there be a mediator found, one who can worthily and successfully stand between them, and lay his hand upon them both, then might kindly intercourse be possible, but not otherwise. But who is this mediator to be ? How can there be found one that shall possess all the qualifications necessary for the performance of such a function ? Where, for example, shall he be found who is capable of speaking for God to man ? To speak for God, he must be able to comprehend all God's thoughts, to know them, so as in communicating them, to do to them no injustice ; and this requires a mind as large as God's. He must also be able to communicate God's thoughts, and to put their full and correct import into modes and words appreciable and comprehensible by man. Or who shall be worthy and fit to speak for man to God ? Who is of such a nature as to give warranty of sympathizing fully with man's condition of ruin, condemnation, and despair, qualified to utter words, fitly pleading for such misery and crime : and yet of dignity enough to appear before God, and be fitly there the representative of human nature ? Whom God shall regard as honourable enough to listen to, and accept ? Ah, my brethren, if we want a mediator between God and man, some one to speak for God to us, and for us to God, where, where shall he be found ? Where but in Jesus, whose person qualifies him in every respect for the undertaking ; who, as divine, is partaker of all the sentiments of his Father, and, as human, transfers them without injury into the language of mankind ; who, as human, can speak as a brother for his brethren ; and, as Divine, can speak as a divinity to his fellow. The name of Jesus "is as ointment poured forth." I look on the work of Christ—

2. In the second place, *as a work of expiation for sin.* I spoke just now of the holiness of God keeping the corrupt world at a distance ; I speak now of the righteousness of God laying an ungodly world under condemnation. The inflexible righteousness of God, as Governor of the world, necessitates the execution of the righteous law, which is holy, just, and good, though in the execution of it every soul should perish. Neither does the righteousness of God permit any redemption or release from the sentence of condemnation, apart for some sacrifice for sin, available to maintain the honour of God's law, while the sinner shall be released from its curse. We want, then, an offering ; but where shall we find one ? The question which Isaac put to his father in relation to a similar matter, is applicable here.

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"Behold the fire and the wood, my father, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" Ah, where is the lamb for a burnt offering for our transgression? See the qualifications the sacrifice must possess.

1. In the first place, as a sacrifice for man, he must be a man. The nature that is offered in expiation, must be the same nature as that which has rebelled.

2. In the second place, as an offering, an expiation for sin, he must be a pure and holy man, having no sin of his own. The contaminated could never be accepted in sacrifice for the contaminated.

3. In the third place, he must not only be a man, and a holy man, but more than a man; since if the sacrifice were simply human, one life would go for one, and for one only. If the sacrifice had been man only, he could have saved by his death but one man; and there would have been needed as many Saviours as there are sinners. We want more than a man—a something about him that shall give him more dignity than any one of his fellows; a man of preciousness enough, if such can be found, that it shall be said of him, that, his life is an equivalent for the life of mankind. And where are you to find this? Of men you may have plenty, but sinful men. Or, if you were to find a holy man, then he is but the equivalent of one transgressor. It is in Jesus alone that these indispensable qualifications are found. There is the "Lamb for the burnt offering," with all you want in him. You want a man for sacrifice. Jesus is your brother, and has the same nature to offer as that in which the rebellion hath been perpetrated. You want a holy man. This is he "in whom was no sin, neither was there guile found in his mouth." You want a man of more dignity than man possesses. Again, this is he—a human being, with whom the Divine nature is so blended and identified, that all he does and all he suffers has a value, not only equivalent to the whole race of man, but to as many worlds, if it were possible, as there are individuals of our race. My brethren, the divinity of Jesus Christ gives to his obedience unto death a value that is infinite. His "name is as ointment poured forth."

4. In the fourth place, I look on the work of our Lord and Saviour as a work of living love and saving power. Having yielded up his life and regained it, "death hath no more dominion over him." Raised from the dead, he ascended up on high, and took his seat on his Father's throne; and there he is to carry out actively the work of Redemption, in a mode in which none but himself could effect it. Suppose, for example, to test this matter, any other were placed there. What is it that you want in him to whom all power shall be entrusted for the salvation of his church, and for the execution of the Father's purposes? You want, first of all, some one that can understand him, that can know what the plans are that are meant to be fulfilled, and the mode by which they are to be fulfilled. You want not only some one that can know God's mind, but some one also that can know man's mind—the good man's mind, the bad man's mind, and the devil's mind; and

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all the elements that are brought into play in these marvellous proceedings. You want some one that can understand all, and that can know how to take such measures, and form such apprehensions of things, as to prepare himself for the last judgment, and one who shall know how to judge when the day of judgment comes. Then you want some one that can do it, as well as understand it—some one that has wisdom enough, and that has power enough, to carry out what he comprehends to be done. And thirdly, you want some one that has love and compassion enough to do it, and so to identify himself with this poor miserable world, as to reckon its redemption the great object for which he lives and labours; to be always about it, and to live for nothing else; to be incessantly carrying on this work with the guilty, the obstinate, the rebellious, the infirm, the sorrowful, the tempted, the tried, so that he has nought to do but to be the comforter of the mourners, the strength of the hopeless, the refuge of the weak, and the victor for the feeble. You want one with knowledge, wisdom, power, love enough for that. Ah! where do you find him, but in Jesus? The capacity and the qualifications of all besides sink into nothing. I would not believe an angel, if he told me that he understood the eternal plans; I would not believe an angel, if he said he had pity enough, or power enough, to conduct me to heaven. I can believe Jesus. I trust I do believe him. O yes, for that eternal wisdom, that divine knowledge, that infinite understanding, that Almighty power, and that deathless love, which lived even in the death on Calvary, and still lives and glows in heaven, I can trust thee, my Saviour. Thy “name is as ointment poured forth.”

III. Thirdly, I said that the name of Jesus should be as ointment poured forth ON ACCOUNT OF THE ARDOUR OF HIS LOVE.

And this is the hardest of all the three parts of my discourse. Not that it is not pleasant to speak of the love of Christ, and it ought to be easy to expatiate upon it; but it is so hard to do justice to it. It has very often seemed to me a marvellous thing, and utterly inexplicable, how Jesus Christ ever loved sinners at all. For although it is very easy for us to have an idea, since we have the sentiment ourselves of compassion, how the poor, and miserable, and undone, may excite pity, yet with us there is this law, that the excitement of pity is always obstructed by our observation of criminality. We pity distress readily, and in cases where we find the distress is not the result of crime or folly, our pity flows in its broadest and most copious stream; but if we find distress which has been brought on by culpable means—for example, the distress which men bring on themselves by habits of drunkenness; the distress which men bring on themselves by embezzlement or by fraud; the distress which men bring on themselves by the commission of a greater crime, such as murder—in proportion to our abhorrence of the crime is the diminution of our pity. We come to say—‘Ah! you have deserved it; I have little pity for you;’ till at last, I take it, we may come to say in such cases—‘I see you are miserable; but I have no pity, your conduct has

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been so bad.' O, my friends, suppose Christ had proceeded in relation to his pity according to the law of our own nature, and that his love had been repressed by his observation of our guilt! Why, he had to see in us a greater culpability than ever we have seen in others. I talked about embezzlement, and fraud, and even greater crimes; but our criminality towards God far transcends all this. Our alienation, and enmity, and disobedience to him, must present us to Jesus Christ in an aspect necessitating his most intense abhorrence; and yet he pitied us. O! he is not made like man. I do not believe that ever man could have pitied in such a case; I do not believe that ever angels could have pitied in such a case. Such love is a property which is altogether divine, that passes over what is adapted to excite abhorrence, and pities notwithstanding all.

And, then, as to the degree in which our blessed Saviour has loved. O! I confess I am at an utter loss here. I would gladly vacate this place, and put any one of you into it; I would make you all preachers, and ask you questions, and bid you speak to me, and help me to explain a theme so untractable, How much he loved? Why, tell me, then, how high the glory was from whence he came; tell me how felicitous the place in his Father's bosom was which he left for us; tell me how sweet those songs, and how rich those glories were, which for us he abandoned when he came down to this world. I cannot tell how much he loved until I know these things. How much he loved? Tell me, then, how far he humbled himself when he took our nature upon him. Tell me how much he suffered, in a world of guilt and shame like this. Tell me how great the ignominy was beneath which he died, and how deep the anguish of his soul, when he exclaimed—"My God! my God! why hast thou forsaken me?" Those words ring in ones ears with a terrible import, like thunder, which, as you listen to it, utters a voice which you revere but do not understand. My brethren, the love of Jesus passeth knowledge. To tell you that he lived and was beneficent, that he died and was patient, is to utter words, which, in relation to such a theme, seem to have no justice. They are too poor. I bid each of you conceive for yourselves how much Jesus loved. Verily, his name should be "as ointment poured forth."

And now, dear friends, for the conclusion of these few thoughts. I have said that the name of Jesus *should* be as "ointment poured forth." I now desire, in the first place, to make an inquiry of a practical kind, and to put the question to you who hear me. Is the name of Jesus "as ointment poured forth" to you? Is it fragrant to your hearts, dear hearers? Ah! I fear that this question divides you. I fear that there are two classes in relation to this matter. There are some of you who must say—"Why, no; the name of Jesus has no fragrance for me. I use it sometimes—sometimes profanely; sometimes lightly; but I do not think it is fragrant to me; I know many names that are more so." Ah! you do! Their name is Legion, I take it,—vanity, pleasure, wealth, ambition. These names are more fragrant to you, perhaps, than the name of Jesus. Ah! what a mistaken judgment you

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have formed ! Have you, then, no need of a Saviour, no sin to be forgiven, no soul to be saved, no hell to flee from, no heaven to win, that you find no fragrance in the name of Jesus ? There is no other Saviour ; no other name is given under heaven whereby you can be saved. Are you bent on perishing ? Will you have nothing he has to give ? You would not turn away rudely from a man that offered you a sovereign ; some of you, perhaps, not from a man that offered you a sixpence ; and you can turn away from Jesus, who presents to you salvation, as though he offered you nothing worthy of your acceptance. O ! this is dreadful trifling ! It is an awful thing to live in a dying world in a state like this. It is a dreadful thing to stand on the brink of eternity without an interest in Christ. You labour for the meat that perisheth ; but labour not for the meat that perisheth, nor do another stroke of this world's toil, till you have taken hold of Jesus as your Saviour. You lie down on your bed, and sleep ; but sleep not a wink on the brink of the grave, on the brink of hell, till you have embraced Jesus as your Saviour. You go to places of pleasure ; but smile no more, and take no more pleasure, with damnation near at hand, or while you refuse an interest in him who alone can redeem you from its pains.

Secondly, there are many of you, dear brethren, with whom I know well that the name of Jesus is "as ointment poured forth." Ah ! you have learned to love him—the friend that gave himself for you, and drew your hearts to him, and hath in so many, many instances fulfilled the great and precious promise which he sealed with his blood. How many times have you found his name

"A balm for every wound,
A cordial for your fears!"

And it has not grown stale yet. No ! you will rejoice to travel in the midst of this perfume, all the way to heaven. O let it never vanish from you ; be never far from the fountain of it. Live near to Jesus ; and mistrust him not. Weep no tears of bitterness and despair. No ! the name of Jesus is too full of consolation. Let it ever rejoice your souls. He is the Saviour whom you never have found disappoint you ; and whom you will not surely recompense for his faithfulness with mistrust.

O, my brethren, there is something in these thoughts that entertain us to-day, fitted, not only for our passage through all the various paths of this guilty, trying world, but something in them that blends heaven and earth together. The name of Jesus is a name above every name that is named, whether in earth or in heaven. That same name which is fragrant for us, is "as ointment poured forth" among the seraphim of God. O the familiar fragrance, that shall make us feel at home in heaven ! The fragrance of that name shall make us rejoice in the world above, conscious that it is the same as that which has cheered us in the world below. Blessed Jesus, how shall we thank thee for making thy name, once so disregarded, fragrant to our hearts ? Teach us to love thee amidst all earth's changes, and prepare us to spend with thee a happy immortality !

PREPARATION FOR JUDGMENT.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 28, 1851,
BY THE REV. WILLIAM BROCK,
AT EXETER HALL.

"But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth?"—
Malachi iii. 2.

Of all the days of the coming of the Son of man, of which the scriptures make mention, his coming at the day of judgment is the primest and the chief. With no other coming can that be compared, in regard to the government of God or to the destinies of man. "Then shall be gathered before him all nations;" ourselves among the rest, and then every one of us shall have to give an account of himself to God; and then we must go away either unto everlasting punishment, or unto life eternal. The Lord, my brethren, is coming, and to that coming of the Lord let us refer in the almost impassioned interrogation of the language of this text—"Who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth?" Nearer than ever is that moment, when yonder heavens shall reveal him, and when, on the full effulgence of his glory, you and I shall be compelled to gaze. Not then will a star be necessary to tell us where the Saviour may be seen. Brighter than ten thousand stars, and more brilliant than a universe of light, he will attract towards himself universal attention; and as you and I are looking, he will command us to come there, and stand at his bar. "We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ." We cannot help it; we cannot postpone it: in our own persons we must be there; for our own examination we must be there, to our own personal condemnation or our own personal justification, we must be there. And I thought, as I looked forward to meeting you here to-night, that it might be well for us to look, and to look with great carefulness to the ground of our hope, that when he shall come, we shall be able to abide his coming, and so to stand at his judgment seat, as to receive from his lips the award of everlasting life, and let us now—numerous as we may be,—as far as we can do so individually, the one amongst the other, that is, you and I—let me ask one class, one series of persons, whether they are not looking to a ground of acceptance with God which on examination will turn out to be utterly untrustworthy and therefore to be abandoned without delay; and who can tell but that God, who works wonderfully, may be pleased so to work, that some of you, who may have come into this place to-night, yet trusting in refuges of lies, may, ere you retire, have fled for refuge to that one hope, that only hope that is set before you in the gospel. That I shall have the prayers of my Christian brethren, I know: I think that I may say, I shall have your attention, I know too.

Now then—"Who shall abide the day of the Lord's coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth" in the judgment? "I shall," one man replies to me, "because I am diligent in my obedience to that law which says—'Do this, and thou shalt live,'" and your statement to me would be something like this—"I am aware of my character as a moral agent, and I take care to act as my moral agency requires; I am alive to the Divine authority; I bow down to the Divine commandments, and I do, both towards God and towards man, what God requires." But, if I, interrupting you, suggest that you may be mistaken, you go on, peradventure, to say, "I never take God's name in vain; I never violate the Sabbath day; I never commit adultery; I never bear false witness against my neighbour; I never covet that which is another man's. In my family—go you and ask if it be not so—I am affectionate; in my business, honourable; toward the rich I am respectful, and towards the poor I am considerate—to all men I do what I would have them do unto me; and, therefore, I hope to abide the day of his coming satisfactorily; because 'the righteous Lord, who loveth righteousness,' will not condemn, but will save me according to his word."

Now, I think, I may have put the case of some who have been brought to this

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place to-night. Now, looking at that as one of the answers which one gets to this interrogation, I should like you to come, and with me to examine into the soundness of it, by the light of that word which Christ says shall be our judge—that is to say, shall present to us the criterion or test, whereby we shall be judged at the last day. What then is the case? You say you obey God's law, do God's will, and you point to a great deal that is virtuous, and religious, and upright, a great deal that, by common consent, is to be admired. Be it so. But now, has your whole life been one unbroken series of acts, such as those? Has every moment been a moment of obedience? Has every act been an act of subordination to the will of God? And has your entire course been in consistency with his will, as revealed here, both negatively and positively? Now, perhaps, you shrink back from that question, and ask, why I will put you to it?—why, I ask you, if you have never sinned at all? Well, I put you upon saying that, because if you have ever sinned at all, your case is gone. On your own showing you are a doomed man. This is my evidence of that—“Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, is guilty of all.” Now are your consciences not with me, that there are some points in which you have offended? Or is it so that you can keep your ground still, so that in the main, and to your own satisfaction, you are in no wise disturbed at the prospect of the Lord's coming? Then harken again. Do you not know that the obedience which God requires, is the obedience of the heart, quite as much as the obedience of the life? This book knows, in fact, of no obedience but that which relates to the heart; and now, I ask you, whether your obedience has been perfect relating to that? Has there been no pride, no vindictiveness, no selfishness, no ungodliness? Have the volitions and emotions, as well as actions, been in conformity with God's will? and that, not now and then, but from the first moment of your becoming a moral agent until now? If you resent that interrogation, the very fact that you do so, is a bad sign as to the safety of your condition. You ask, why I will put you to it, that you never had an evil thought? I put you to it now, because if you are put to it in the day of judgment, there will be no escape from the danger then, and there is now. That danger is the danger of “everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power.” And this is my proof of that—“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy strength, with all thy mind, and thy neighbour as thyself.” Now, is there a man here who can, for a moment, calmly take the position, and keep it, that when the Lord shall come to judgment, he shall stand accepted upon the ground of his obedience to that law, which “requirieth truth in the inward parts,” and knoweth nothing of an external obedience whatever, except it be obedience springing from right motives, and from principles in accordance with the law of God. Now, my brethren, let me ask you, whether you would be prepared to submit all that you ever thought, all that you have ever desired, all that you have ever designed, to the inspection of the Divine omniscience? Is there a man here who would submit the secret history of his heart to the observation of a living being, even to the friend of his bosom, the man he could trust the most? Why, you begin to shrink back from the position which, with great complacency, it may be, you have kept till now. And let me ask you to take the exposition of God's law, which I read just now from the sermon on the mount. What is the sin of vindictiveness? It is a crime which our Lord distinctly designates, unkindness of heart. What constitutes the sin of adultery? He declares that it is a voluptuous or a lascivious look; and are we then, with this exposition of the Divine law before us, and with God himself as coming to judgment—are we now prepared to say, that when the Lord Jesus shall come, we shall abide the day of his coming upon the ground of our personal obedience? Seeing that if you had obeyed God's will—granting this for the sake of the argument—you would have been saved; what matters that, seeing that you have not done all God's will? If you have not been a proud man, you have been selfish, or if you have not been selfish, you have been sensual; or if you have not been sensual, you have been vindictive; or if you have not been vindictive, you have been ungodly, or if you have not been ungodly habitually, you have been ungodly occasionally: your own conscience bears witness against you. Why, no man here will say, that he has never uttered a single improper word, nor thought a single improper thought, nor done a single improper deed.

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You begin to grant my case to me. You say, if it comes all to all, it has not been an obedience of the heart like this. Well, then, your case breaks down, for it is thus written again—"Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the law, to do them." Now you admit, when pressed to it, that you have not done all; then you have done nothing—nothing so far as the ground of your acceptance with God is concerned—by your own obedience to his law. "Who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth?" Not the man who is looking for his salvation to the works of his own hands.

Then when I propose this question, I think I know an answer that I shall obtain from other quarters. "I hope to abide that dreadful coming of the Lord, because though I do sin, yet when I sin, I am sorry for it, and as God is merciful, he will therefore forgive my sin." Now, it may be that I have comprehended a large class in the answer which I am presuming now. Your statement would be something like this—"Far from me be the paramount folly of pretending that I never sin. I grant that I do sin. Circumspect in the main, I am not circumspect always. Careful for the most part my carefulness sometimes fails me; my cheerfulness, for example, gets to levity, and that sinks down into profanity; perhaps something worse. I do not pretend to be a perfect man." You may say, "I know, that both in my heart and in my conduct, there is that of which I need to be greatly ashamed; and I am ashamed of it. I go to my heavenly Father with the expression of my shame, and God has promised that he will forgive me, as I forgive any repenting child." Well now, that is plausible, but it is utterly hollow and delusive throughout. First, your theory of acceptance with God, as now placed, is thoroughly fallacious, as in regard to the character of God. Now, hearken a little, and think a little; you say that God is merciful; but is that all? Is there nothing else but that? Is God's mercifulness everything that this book says about God? Are there no other attributes besides his compassion? You grant, at once, that there are; but you say that mercy modifies the whole; but the whole modifies mercy just the same. You can put in no claim whatever to the mercy of the Divine character, as against the other attributes of his character. Let me remind you, that your statement about the Divine attributes, must be taken with great care. They may be separable, intellectually, so far, perhaps, as any given statement is concerned, but they are not separable actually. It is not that he is a God of mercy here, and a God of justice somewhere else, but these attributes together constitute the Godhead, and they are together just that which makes our heavenly Father what he is; so that if you take his mercy, and make that mercy modify his justice, as that his justice shall be utterly annihilated and absorbed, what have you done? Actually denied God Almighty! A god all mercy is nothing but a god of the imagination of your own minds. The worshipping of him is just as much idolatry as though you were to bow down to the idols of India. What saith the scriptures? "He is a just God and a Saviour." When he pardons the sinner, he must be just at the very time that he is the justifier of him that believes in Jesus. Now, take a case, familiar enough to us all. Was not God merciful in olden time? Well, you say, merciful now, of course he was merciful then: but do you not remember, that by his own immediate interposition, he actually destroyed the entire family of man with the immaterial exception of eight souls? And was he not merciful then? Just so, and as he was then, he is now—that is, he is righteously merciful, and he is mercifully righteous. You and I cannot—even apart from some other considerations, which I must pass now—occupy the ground that God will have mercy upon us as sinners. You admit, by the by, that you are sinners. I am not dealing with you as men that have never sinned—you admit that you do sin, and that being the case, you must recollect what God says—"The soul that sinneth, it shall die." And then again, your theory of acceptance with God is fallacious in regard to your own character. You say, that as you forgive your child, so God will forgive you, because you are his child. Ay, and is that all? If you had been a sinless, obedient, and grateful child, your case might have holden good, but the fact that you have sinned alters your case entirely. If you had been innocent, well and good; but according to your own admission, the innocence is all gone, so you cannot speak now of being the child, and God the Father. Besides, to utterly break up this

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most plausible, but disasterous theory, does the father never punish his child? Is it not possible, even in this world, through the disobedience of the child, for other relationships to come into operation so that even the father may be disposed to act otherwise, than as a father he would be disposed to do? But that is not all. I ask you to see how sin altered the condition of Cain. God was his father, and yet God punished him, so that he went about the world declaring, "My punishment is greater than I can bear." See too how sin affected the case of the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah. God had created them, and God punished them. Go and look at Jerusalem and Palestine, for there lies patent, on the face of them, an illustration of the punishment inflicted on them by God their Father, in consequence of their sins. God was the Father of Ananias and Sapphira, but he punished them with a most significant and fearful death; and God was the Father of Adam and Eve; and who was it that drove them out of paradise? And who was it that placed the flaming sword, which turned every way, that through paradise they might not pass to glory? Why, it was even God their Creator. God was the Father of a worse than all these, one of whom the Bible says—"It had been good for that man if he had never been born;" but God was his Creator nevertheless, and God was his Father too; in that sense, and in no other, is God your Creator and your Father as out of Christ. You and I have no more reason to expect that when the Lord shall come to Judgment, we shall escape from perdition by pleading his paternity, than those have whose doom is already sealed; their sins, more notorious, have gone before them to Judgment; and your sins, less notorious, shall follow after. You cannot hold your ground. You are not simply a child; you are a sinful and rebellious child; and God is not only merciful, but he is just withal. And again, your theory of acceptance is utterly fallacious in regard to the nature of repentance. You say, that though you sin, you repent. Well, what then? Granted that your repentance is ever so profound and sincere; granted that it is after a godly sort, repentance does not exert any reflex influence upon the past. Repentance does not alter the fact, that you and I have sinned; it does not cancel transgression; it does not place us where we were before we committed that sin. Repentance, my brethren, is one thing; innocence is another thing; and if you and I are as penitent as was the thief upon the cross, we are not therefore innocent so as to claim the rewards and accompaniments of innocence. To see how obvious this is, you have only to look abroad upon society. A man passes the early part of his life in profligacy, and God, who connects suffering with sin—blessed be his name for the appointment! takes care to carry out the appointment. Presently there comes poverty, suffering, and disgrace; but the profligate youth, by and by, becomes convinced of his error, and to all intents and purposes, becomes an altered man. Now then, does his repentance put him in possession of his property again? Does repentance re-invigorate him with health? Does lamentation which, though it be made in all sincerity, claim for him universal admiration, confidence, and respect? By no means. I could find thousands of instances, in this metropolis, in which punishment, obviously, and demonstrably, outlives the sin; and so it is with all God's governments, upon a larger or a smaller scale; he has ordained that indemnity shall not necessarily follow even our repentance. If a man have perpetrated that which is evil, whatever may be his subsequent sorrow for the crime, that perpetration, and the consciousness of it, moreover, remain just the same. Why, reasonable men as you are, what has become of your thoughtfulness all at once, to talk about repentance exempting transgressors from punishment? to talk about punishment authorizing you to look forward withal to the reward due only to the innocent? Why, I could take you to condemned cells, and show you some of the finest specimens of penitence that were ever witnessed. I have known instances myself, in which men have been lawfully condemned to suffer the punishment of the law, who have become as penitent as in the nature of the case was possible; but that repentance has not thrown open the condemned cell. That repentance has not cancelled their guilt, and notwithstanding all that, they have been condemned to receive the due reward of their transgressions. As it is in human government, so, my brethren, is it in the Divine government. It is not so that when you have sinned you may repent, and repenting, you may certainly be forgiven. Your repentance is well, necessary, important, essential, in its proper place; but

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you must take care to put things where God puts them. He does not put repentance as the cause of forgiveness ; he puts another thing—of which I shall speak presently,—as the only cause of that. Perhaps you say, Well, but do we not read, “ Whoso confesseth his sin shall find mercy ? ” Do we not read that “ if we confess and forsake our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness ? ” Yes, but what do you read next, immediately in the connection of that ? “ The blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from all sin.” A man is sorry for his sins, and is pardoned—why? because he is sorry for his sins? No, but because of the application to him through God’s own sovereign mercy, of the efficacious and precious blood. I do not stand here to say, that I do not care for a man’s being sorry for his sins. I do care. I would rather find a man ashamed of himself than find him utterly careless and foolhardy ; but what I want to impress on your minds is, that your repentance will not find you acceptance with God ; that you may repent, and yet perish notwithstanding all. You may be saved, but not because God does not care about your sin. You may be saved, but not because God is your Father. You may be saved, but not because you are deeply and profoundly penitent. You may be saved, but you must seek some other ground than that which I presumed just now. O, it is all sand, ay, quick-sand : the first blast of the arch-angel’s trump shall altogether subvert the superstructure of your hope, and scatter the foundations of that hope to the winds, whilst your conscience will say to you then in a voice of thunder, what I hope it will say to you to-night, efficaciously, “ The Lord hath rejected thy confidences, thou shalt not prosper in them.” “ Who may abide the day of his coming ? and who shall stand when he appeareth ? ” Not the man who simply speaks about sorrow, and hopes that being penitent, the merciful God will forgive him.

But now, I shall get another answer from other quarters ; and it is something like this—“ Who may abide the day of his coming ? and who shall stand when he appeareth ? ” “ I shall,” it is said to me, “ because I not only repent of the sin which I have committed, but I take care to amend, and to avoid that sin ; ” and you speak to me something like this—“ It would be folly in the extreme, as you have shown, to look for mercy after that former manner, but along with the penitence, I take care to put the amendment ; and so I trust by the improvement of the future, to expiate and provide, in a measure at least, for that which is past ” Perhaps you say, and say truthfully—“ No more profligacy for me ; no more intemperance for me ; no more turning my back on public ordinances for me ; I have commenced a new career ; I have set out on a fresh course ; I have, in the plain vernacular phrase—I have turned over a new leaf ; and now, I hope, that when God shall appear, it will be well with me ; because along with his mercy, and my repentance, I conjoin this amendment too.”

Now, have you forgotten the spirituality, and the perpetuity, and the universality of the Divine law ? Now, suppose that from this time, you do all that God requires, and leave undone all that God prohibits. Suppose that. Do you hold it possible that you shall ever be able to do more than that which it is your bounden duty to do at the present moment. No matter how virtuously you may live for the future ; and no matter how long you may live for the future,—be the virtuousness of your character ever so remarkable, and be the conformatity of your own conduct to God ever so praiseworthy, can you now carefully think about the matter, and say—“ I shall be able there, and there, and there, to put in a work of supererogation ? ” Why, my brethren, to talk of doing a work of supererogation, is absurd in the extremest degree ! For let me quote to you the language again—“ Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy strength, with all thy mind, and thy neighbour as thyself.” Now, I ask, where in the nature of the case as between you and God—I ask where there is a single interval into which you can introduce a work of supererogation ? Suppose you should live to be as old as Methuselah, and suppose you should live all that time like an angel of light, could you do at any given moment, that which that given moment did not solemnly require, as in the name of God ? Well, now, take a case. You and I say—“ We were greatly ungodly yesterday.” Take that case. Now when last night we looked back on the ungodliness, we could not say, if we were intelligent, and if we were instructed in these matters—we could not say in our

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sorrow for the ungodliness of yesterday—"To-morrow I will be so godly, as that, out of the morrow's godliness, I will find compensation for the wanting godliness of to-day." Now you feel that when it is so put to you. If I awoke this morning, and entered on the engagements of this day, with every possible moment of it foreclosed—I mean as to any claim that God had upon me—where is the room for my making up for the deficiencies of yesterday? You grant me my case at once, and you say—"That likewise fails me; for I see, that whatever may be the value of amendment"—and I say there is great value attaching to it; I will not deny amendment, nor repentance, nor good works; but on the contrary; I only want to take them out of their wrong places, and put something else there;—you say, upon looking at it, you cannot undo to-morrow by any specific or remarkable obedience, that which you have done to-day. And then, my brethren, what hope have you and I that there will be much betterment and much improvement to-morrow? The world will not be much better, and then we, in ourselves, shall be no better at all; and as for the conception that you will pass the time of your pilgrimage for the future, in a condition ever so much better than that future shall require, that must surely only need to be looked at to give that up too. Never commit a sin for the future; never let the eye be the inlet of temptation, nor the lips be the outlet of evil; never have a single word or desire that God shall disapprove—why, no man here thinks that that will be his case for the time to come. Well then, if it be so, that amendment does not make up for the past, and that you have no rational ground for believing that the amendment will be even as great as it ought to be, shall you go on to your last and your great account, resting on the plea—"I trust to be forgiven my former sins, because at a given moment I left off the commission of sin." I do not think that the given moment will ever come in this world, when you will have left off the commission of sin. And even if it should, I ask again, with what I think is becoming solemnity and earnestness—I ask what is to be done with your old sins? how are they to be cancelled? how are they to be pardoned? what is to be done with them? You cannot cancel them; you cannot pardon them by anything you can do, and so far as your intention was just now, you are actually approaching the judgment seat of Christ, with something like tranquility and composure on the ground of your surplus holiness, and it turns out that it was no such thing—on your own strength, and that utterly breaks down—on the theory that the virtuous would make up for the vicious, the true would make up for the false, the rewardable would make up for the punishable, the things that accompany salvation would make up for the things that entail on you perdition.

Men, brethren, fathers, in the name of that Judge eternal, before whose bar I must stand with you, I do pray, I do beseech you to-night, to abandon that "refuge of lies;" for as to him who shall "abide the day of the Lord's coming, or who shall stand when he appeareth," he is not the man who, having repented, as he says, of the past, is taking care to amend as to the time which is yet to come. The others were false refuges; so is this. Relying on them men would perish, relying upon this you will perish too. A lost case! A doomed man is he who is thinking now, or who has been thinking, or should go on thinking rather, that when God appears, he will plead the amendment of the future, in order to expiate, or make up for the past!

Still I get another answer from another quarter when I ask, "Who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth?" I get an answer something like this—"I shall, for I am conjoining the work of Saviour with my own work," and your case to me would be something like this—"Glad am I that you have been endeavouring to disturb the self-righteous, glad am I that this closing service has been an exhortation to the people to look well to the foundation! How glad am I with regard to myself, that my foundation is secure! I think of him who 'came into the world to save sinners'; I think of him who is 'able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him'; I know that my obedience is not perfect, and that repentance and amendment of themselves will not avail; and I thankfully take advantage of what Christ has done, for I am deficient, and I look to him to make that deficiency good." Well now, if the other cases were plausible in some aspects, yet dangerous all the time, I reckon this to be the most plausible, and by very far the most dangerous. It speaks of the gospel, it makes

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mention of the work of Christ ; it relates to the great office of his mediation and atonement, thereby seeming to be the gospel ; but as much unlike the gospel as light is unlike darkness ; as much unlike the gospel as life is unlike death. Why, my brethren, have you never heard, or have you never known how this Book of ours does entirely shew beyond all controversy that there might have been—as in the case of Adam—through original obedience to God's law—that there might have been the enjoyment of God's favour ; but there is no other theory of acceptance here but that of salvation wholly by work which all perceive to be impossible, or salvation only by grace. You have a thorough argument here. I will read it to you in order that you may see how good this case is. The Apostle writing under Divine inspiration, says that, “if it be by grace then it is no more of works ; otherwise grace is no more grace : but if it be of works, then it is no more grace ; otherwise work is no more work.” Now I commend that to you. It is in the eleventh chapter of St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans. You see how entirely it subverts your ground. You have got the alternative argued both ways ; you have got the entire discourse to your hand. The result is this—if you are to be saved by works, very well, be saved by works ; if you are to be saved by grace, very well, be saved by grace ; if it is of works it is of works ; if it is of grace it is of grace. You cannot blend the two do what you will. There is not only a necessary natural contrariety ; but you have that contrariety declared by the Spirit of the living God. Granted that Jesus Christ came into the world ; he came into the world *to save sinners ; not to help them to save themselves.* He did come down from heaven for the great purposes of redemption ; but it was that he might redeem men wholly ; and that by virtue of his own mediation they might be “justified freely through the grace of God.” He “died the just for the unjust.” But now mark me ! It was not that he might follow in your train when you go to the throne of God's mercy, or as in such a case, it would be to the throne of God's government. It is not that he “died the just for the unjust” to follow in your train just to supply any deficiency—that he may perfect or make good that which at that moment should be wanting. He “died the just in the stead of the unjust, to bring you to God.” He must go first and not come after. He must have the whole and not a part of this great work to do ; and if you have been so thinking, if you have been so reasoning, if it have been you, as far as possible, and Christ where the possibility ends with yourself, depend upon it you have been wrong, wholly and fatally wrong. This is his work—a great, mighty, marvellous, everlasting, divine work, coincident with all the wants of humanity, and coeval with all the purposes of God from eternity. There is his work, broad enough, and strong enough, and kindly enough in all its aspects to encourage your hopes for salvation ; but there is no salvation for any man in regard to that work, but as he takes it “all in all.” He will not give his own glory to another ; he will not divide the honour of salvation with you ; he will not stand just to wait on your contingencies, and make up that which peradventure you may have at his hand. If you will be saved he will save you ; but if you chose thus to connect together what God has put assunder you must take the consequences ; and you will go when the great day of that universal reckoning shall come—you will go to his tribunal, not “lifting up your head because your redemption draweth nigh,” but being “weighed in the balance,” and you will be “found wanting.” And then there will be no voice of mercy. We have come to our last service here ; but if we get to our last service there as you are now, and you are “weighed in the balance and found wanting,” there is nothing there that will meet your eye or your ear that will in any wise indicate hope or encouragement then. So that if you speak of perfect obedience the Bible contradicts it ; if you speak of repentance, the gospel disowns it ; if you speak of future amendment, the Bible will have nothing to do with it as the ground of your acceptance with God. If you seek to conjoin the work of Christ with your own, by all that is solemn in the development of doctrine, and by all that is solemn in the statement of fact, this Book of Revelation declares “that man's religion is vain ;” and for a man's religion to be vain ! Just think of that ! Why on any theory, by common consent, a man's religion is the principal thing ! As is the compass to the mariner, as is the foundation to the architect, as is the spar to the drowning man, so is your religion to you, and if your religion be vain, why where are you ? It is with you as it

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would be with the mariner if his compass were depolarized ; it is with you as it would be with the architect if his foundation were giving way ; ay ! is with you as it would be with the drowning man if the spar which he had grasped should collapse and crumble in his grasp ! Brethren, out of Christ you are like drowning men on rotten spars. You have not only danger but you think you have got a remedy and escape from the danger ; but the remedy only aggravates the disease ! The man who is trusting to any of the representations which have been made, or to any of the theories which have been presented, is surely in that predicament. God declares to him before hand, and the Judge will declare to him, at last—"That man's religion is vain." Everything is at stake, and you are risking everything on "a mockery, a delusion, and a snare." You cannot "abide the day of the Lord's coming." It is a moral impossibility, impossible that you should "stand when he appeareth." Not impossible, absolutely, blessed be His name ! Methinks I see that great white throne set, and methinks I see him that sitteth on the throne looking, with ineffable satisfaction, on group there awaiting his decision. That group has come from the same world with these. They were sinners as are these ; they come from the same circumstances, and the same scenes generally ; and when they give in their account, the account looked at in many of its aspects, is no better than was theirs. But mark ! They come to that tribunal ; but there turns out to be an item in their account somehow, by virtue of which the Judge looking at them still with satisfaction ineffable, at once gives to them a place of honour at his right hand ; and then, when the judgment is over, he turns to them, and says—"Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." And then, when the everlasting doors are lifted up, that the King of glory may come in, they, as the participants of his glory, "enter in with him ;" and so are they "ever with the Lord." These, these shall go away into everlasting punishment, but that group shall go away into life eternal.

And what was the item that was found in regard to their account ? This—they believed on the name of the only begotten Son of God. They had renounced all their own righteousness, and had sought to be "found in him," having on his "righteousness, which is of God by faith." They had not disowned the practice of holiness, for their holiness would have passed muster in comparison with the holiness of the other party ; they had not disowned the practice of holiness ; but they had disowned all reliance upon it, and it is found written in that book, that the life which they lived in the flesh, was a life of faith in the Son of God—that they received him as the Lamb of God—that they trusted him as the propitiation for their sins, and that they looked forward to their account at the general judgment, not in reliance on that which they had done, but wholly and absolutely on that, which Christ had done ; and when that was found, therefore, they were saved. Now let that be found about you, and you shall be saved likewise. Let the recording angel now, as he waits on our terminating services here—let the recording angel have to write down this about you, in the book of God's remembrance—"He deplores his guiltiness ; he renounces all intention and desire to prosecute those courses of guiltiness any more ; at the same time he embraces Christ, as the man would embrace that spar on which all his deliverance depended. He does it now." Be it that such is the record ! "He does it with all his heart, he does it in dependance on the help of the Holy Spirit ; he does it heart and soul, as a living sacrifice to God." Let that be the record of this evening, and you "*shall* stand when he appeareth," you *shall* "abide when he cometh" to the judgment, for he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired of all them that believe. "Believe, then, on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved."

And this is the sum and substance of the whole matter. This is just the alphabet of the great truths which that Book reveals to us. Do you learn that alphabet ; master the elements ; embrace the corresponding truth ; and then, by and by, you and I shall stand there ; and instead of being dismayed, we shall possess our souls in joyfulness, and together we shall "enter into the joy of our Lord." And so with simple, evangelical appeal to you, we terminate our services here.

THE GREAT EXHIBITION.

A Thanksgiving Service

AT EXETER HALL.

SAMUEL MORLEY, ESQ., PRESIDED.

ON Thursday Evening, November 6, 1851, a "Thanksgiving Meeting" was held in Exeter Hall, "gratefully to recognize the Divine hand in the various circumstances which led to the Great Exhibition; in the auspicious manner in which it has terminated; and in the success of the Sabbath Services held there during the months the Exhibition was open." The Meeting was very numerously attended, and the proceedings, as will be seen, were exceedingly interesting.

SAMUEL MORLEY, Esq., having taken the chair,

The REV. WILLIAM BROCK commenced the proceedings by giving out the following Psalm, which was sung with great earnestness by the large assembly, accompanied by the powerful Organ, so widely and justly celebrated for its rich and thrilling tones:—

Sing to the Lord with joyful voice;
Let every land his name adore;
The British isles shall send the noise
Across the ocean to the shore.

Nations, attend before his throne
With solemn fear, with sacred joy;
Know that the Lord is God alone:
He can create, and he destroy.

His sovereign power, without our aid,
Made us of clay, and form'd us men;
And when like wandering sheep we stray'd,
He brought us to his fold again.

We are his people, we his care,
Our souls and all our mortal frame;
What lasting honours shall we rear,
Almighty Maker, to thy name!

We'll crowd thy gates with thankful songs,
High as the heavens our voices raise:
And earth, with her ten thousand tongues,
Shall fill thy courts with sounding praise.

Wide as the world is thy command;
Vast as eternity thy love;
Firm as a rock thy truth must stand,
When rolling years shall cease to move.

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THE CHAIRMAN, at the conclusion of the Psalm, rose and said :—I believe that I shall best discharge the very slight duty which has devolved upon me in the arrangements of this evening, by merely adverting, and that very briefly, to the circumstances which have led to this meeting. It is known, probably, to most who are present, that during some months of the past summer, this Hall was opened on the Lord's Day for public worship. That arrangement was the result of a conviction on the part of several friends in London, representing various Evangelical Denominations, that it would be regarded by a large number of strangers from the country, who were then expected to visit London in the approaching season, as an acceptable provision for their comfort and for their religious benefit. The proposal was made by the friends to whom I have referred, to a number of ministers resident in London, also connected with various denominations, and was responded to most readily and warmly by those ministerial friends; and I am glad, as the representative, on this occasion, of the committee upon whom devolved the responsibility of making the necessary arrangements, to give public expression of our thanks to those ministers for the hearty and cordial manner in which they responded to the appeal of the committee, and of our gratitude for the full and earnest exhibition of gospel truth which they were enabled to present to the large congregations which assembled at the forty-four services that were conducted in this place. It is believed that more than 130,000 individuals attended these services, all of which were quite free, and we cannot but believe that, accompanied by the blessing of Almighty God, much lasting good was effected.

It was felt on a review of the manifest success which had attended these services—having regard also to the abounding evidences of that providential care which so signally watched over this metropolis during the late most interesting and important season—that it would be pleasing to ourselves, and grateful to many friends resident in London, that we should thus publicly meet, and, in the words of the advertisement calling the meeting “Gratefully to recognize the Divine hand in the various circumstances which led to the Great Exhibition; in the auspicious manner in which it has terminated; and in the success of the Sabbath Services held in Exeter Hall.” I believe that it is right and proper we should thus meet, and I trust that our assembling together will tend to strengthen all our convictions that there does exist an overruling providence, which is guiding and guarding us from evil and danger, when we are, perhaps, most apprehensive in reference to it. There can be no doubt of the fact, that there were many prognostications of evil in connection with the Great Exhibition. Some had great fears for the health of the metropolis; but I believe that the average health of London was never better or greater than during the past year. Others feared evils of a political kind, from the congregating together of a vast number of foreigners as well as of the general population of London; yet none of these evils have befallen us; and I believe the effect will be that many of those who returned from this country having seen a peaceable nation in the enjoyment of thorough liberty, will be all the better and none the worse for what they witnessed. With these feelings and sentiments we are met this evening, and, I trust that we shall all be gratified, and benefitted

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by the service which we have thus commenced. As the proceedings are to be chiefly of a devotional character, you will allow me to express a conviction that it will be more seemly for you to abstain from those expressions of applause with which it is customary to greet the enunciation of those sentiments which appeal to our convictions and sympathies. I will now call upon Mr. Cooke, the Secretary—to whose unremitting and zealous efforts we are greatly indebted for the success of the Sabbath Services held in this Hall—to read a brief Report.

MR. ROBERT WHALL COOKE then read the following statement:—

Amongst the preparations made for visitors to London during the Great Exhibition, their comfort and convenience on the Sabbath day were not overlooked or forgotten. A Society was early formed to provide religious services in several of the Continental languages, and to give foreigners, especially, a hearty and Christian welcome. So far this was highly commendable and appropriate; but were our own countrymen to be left without some effort of a similar nature? Assuredly not!

Whatever passed in the minds of others on this subject is, of course, unknown; but the first intimation of its desirableness was named to your secretary in the month of October, 1850, by an esteemed friend, who from the first has taken the most lively interest in the subject. It was named to a few friends, and the general feeling was, "that Exeter Hall should be opened during the continuance of the Great Exhibition, for preaching the gospel on the Lord's-day." No steps, however, were taken till the end of February in the present year, when, after some little difficulty, a committee was formed, who met for the first time early in March. They were unanimous in the opinion that Exeter Hall should be secured, and "that the services be conducted by accredited Evangelical ministers residing in London." These labours have been divided amongst Independent, Baptist, Scotch Church, Wesleyan, and Countess of Huntingdon ministers, to whom the committee feel greatly indebted, not only for the value of their services, but for the kind and cheerful manner in which they were given.

The commencement of these services was on the first Sabbath in May, and any anxiety on the part of the Committee, regarding the question of filling the Hall, was speedily set at rest,—every part of that spacious building being full, and hundreds of persons unable to gain admittance; and this has been the case very frequently since—indeed, the Hall has rarely been other than full. It is computed that about one hundred and thirty thousand persons must have been present during the continuance of the services.

A large proportion of the people entering the Hall for the first time in their lives, it was to be expected that they should exhibit some little curiosity and excitement, and the question, "Where is the pulpit?" was very frequently asked. The first swell of the organ, however, had scarcely filled the place, before the vast assembly was calmly waiting for the voice of the preacher. And it is matter of great thankfulness, that in no single instance did the slightest interruption to the due solemnity of the worship of God take place.

The subject of praise was viewed as one of great interest and importance, and the Committee were fortunate in having those presiding at the organ who

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thoroughly met their wishes in this respect. It was thought that a great help to this part of the service would be, that all should be provided with the words to be sung. Accordingly, a selection of psalms and hymns was compiled from the books in general use amongst Evangelical bodies. These were freely circulated throughout the Hall, and some idea may be formed of the interest attached to them, from the fact, that the average number taken away on each Sabbath was 1,136, or 25,000 in the whole. The hymns most frequently sung were, "Come let us join our cheerful songs," "All hail the power of Jesus' name," and the Scotch version of the 100th psalm, "All people that on earth do dwell." Such truly congregational praise has rarely been heard, and it is worthy of notice, that various applications have been made from different parts of the country to know what tunes were sung at Exeter Hall.

The nature and aspect of the multitudes who assembled, varied considerably at different periods. Thus, during the month of May, a large number evidently belonged to that class which is familiarly known as "well to do in the world." There were also more persons belonging to our London congregations this month than afterwards. June began with a reduction in the price of admission to the Exhibition, and there was a corresponding appearance in the audiences of the Hall. In July, the effect of the cheap excursion trains was visible, but by the middle of August there was a marked and unmistakeable proof that hundreds of our artizan and labouring population were enjoying the privilege of a Sabbath at Exeter Hall.

Some attention has been paid to the outside of the building, and it is clearly demonstrable, that a considerable number of persons entered simply from curiosity, on seeing others do so; and from personal observation it is known that amongst the congregations, very frequently, were persons by no means in the lower ranks of society, whose ordinary habits would certainly not have taken them to the House of God.

The number of Sabbaths occupied by these services was twenty-two, giving forty-four separate meetings; and it is worthy of remark, that no collection was made. On several occasions, however, donations were presented after the services were closed. The expenditure necessarily has been considerable, though the services of the ministers were rendered gratuitously. This, however, has been met by metropolitan liberality almost exclusively.

The Committee deeply lament the loss, by death, of one of their number, the late W. Hamilton, Esq., who was much interested in this and every similar movement.

In conclusion, the Committee feel deeply impressed with the Providential care and goodness vouchsafed not only towards these services, but to the Metropolis itself during the continuance of the Great Exhibition. They were induced, therefore, to originate and carry into effect this meeting of public thanksgiving to Almighty God for his abundant mercies, deeming such an act the most suitable and appropriate termination of their labours.

The REV. SAMUEL MARTIN having read the 60th chapter of Isaiah, and the 136th Psalm, and engaged in prayer,

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The REV. JAMES HAMILTON, D.D., rose and delivered the following Address—

Most historians have treated the history of the world, as if the progress of nations were a succession of battles. If such a historian were asked to point out the contrast that most struck himself between the now that is, and 1,900 years ago; most likely he would picture to us Julius Cæsar, and the iron legions of Rome, overwhelming a horde of barbarians on the fields of Belgium, or Gaul, or Britain. And, in contrast with that, he would show us the descendants of the same barbarians, now in uniforms of scarlet and blue fighting it out behind rows of cannon and heavy ordnance on opposing heights at Waterloo. In the view of such a narrator, the best panorama of a nation's, would be such a panorama as Versailles exhibits “to the glory of France,” where you walk along seven miles of battle-pieces—pictures painted, by Verné and the great artists of France, to commemorate the conflicts in which that great nation has been engaged. And yet, my friends, I think I could give you a contrast more striking, than between Waterloo and those battles to some 1,800 or 1,900 years ago, which introduced the Roman empire into these ends of the earth; and I would first of all sketch a broad and shining river, with swans on its surface, and along its banks a few scattered barbarians skulking in mud hovels, or wattled huts; and in that river, a little island covered with sedges and oziers; and on the remoter banks copses, in which wolves and wild bears are prowling about, sometimes disturbed, but not often, by the intrusion of some long-bearded Druid, or of some of those painted savages. And on the same spot, I would show you a city that has arisen, and that covers fifty or sixty square miles of surface, with two millions and a half of inhabitants; and in that very island once mud-hovelled and ozier-covered, I would show you that great Hall in which more eloquence has been uttered than the world has ever heard since the voices of Demosthenes and Cicero grew silent; and along-side of that great hall, a no less great Christian Temple, beneath whose roof lie, side by side, more heroes, and patriots, and poets than any little rood of holy land contains in all this world; and along-side of that hall, and that temple, rising a majestic fane, the future palace home of Britain's Parliament; and where those copses once grew, and those wild beasts once traversed, and still wilder men—on the space occupied by the huts of these painted savages, I would point out the homes, simple, but sacred, of England's famous worthies—the house, for instance, where Newton kept his nightly vigils, scanning the face of the firmament, and reading from off that firmament the music of the spheres—where Bacon thought out a new philosophy for modern Europe—where, in his fine frenzy Dryden touched his multitudinous lyre, and Milton dreamed of Paradise. Where those wild Pagans, and those blood-stained Druids once found their sorry lurking place—I would point localities long sanctified in the eyes of Christian Europe, as the scenes of the saintly labours of Romaine, and Wesley and Whitefield, and Rowland Hill—the place where Wilberforce and Buxton contrived the freedom of the slave—where Thomas Cranfield taught his Sunday scholars; and where Lord Shaftesbury commenced his Ragged School Reform. And I would crown all this contrast by what is at once its apex and its symbol, the epitome of our modern civilization, and the concentration of our mechanical wonders, far more remarkable than the seven miles of ensanguined canvas at Versailles, where we are reminded to what after

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all is but canonized slaughter and glorified murder—in contrast with these I would take you along the eighteen or twenty miles of our Crystal Palace, and point out what has been there collected—the greatest sight in some respects, and the most full of omens for our world—the greatest sight, I say, in some respects, since the ark itself was seen on Ararat. Why, my friends, we have just been witnessing a spectacle, the full wonder of which has scarcely yet opened on our view; we shall need to get into a remoteness, that few here are likely to live to, before we can see the full augustness and importance of the times in which our lot is cast. I trust that a new leaf is turned in the history of our world. That history has been long enough written in the rubric of the warrior; some pages of it in the cypher of the diplomatist; some in the black letter of the Romish priest, and the sacerdotal mystagogue. It is time that some of it was written, as it now begins to be, in the golden letters of Evangelic industry; in the illuminated characters of brotherly love and Christianized labour. That is the very page to which we have come. I think, I may say, on your behalf and my own, that we are thankful to the Lord for having given us our present time, and our present place. I look upon it, that we, to whom the lines have fallen in this noon tide of the nineteenth century, and whose home is this very centre of the world's civilization and influence—that in this, our day of outward advantage and material appliances for our well being, there never was a people who had so goodly a heritage. Let us thank the Lord for that; and while we look back to the sights which lately regaled our eyes, looking forward to the future with all the good that it will develop, let us remember who it is that hath taught man this wisdom—who is the Great Artist who, wondrously working through the artists of the earth, has given us those surprising and beautiful results.

There is just one thing that I was asked to speak upon; and I would only say a word before giving place to the more appropriate exercises of the evening; and that is, to glance at those influences that have been at work beforehand, to render the Great Exhibition possible. Now, there have been many remarkable things in the Great Exhibition—the house that held it, and the Exhibition itself. More wonderful still, the people who came to look; and most wonderful of all, I should say, the capital, which, in receiving them, demeaned itself in the way that London did. My dear friends, that would not have been the case a hundred years ago. In the days when the London apprentices used to raise such causeless riots—in the days, even, of the Gordon riots, we could scarcely have received into the midst of us the hundreds of thousands of visitors, accompanied with so many exciting incidents from time to time, without the slightest violation of the public peace. There must have been other influences at work in order to bring about a result so happy. What were these influences? Some will say—and I for one would be the last to demur—some will say, One of the preliminary influences was the New Police. All thanks to the New Police! who have conducted themselves in a way that no mere officials could. They have felt that the honour of their country—that the honour of its capital was in some measure entrusted to them in their prominent position; and that deposit they have returned with interest. All thanks to them! But not to them alone. Before London could have acted in the way it has done, and could have constrained, by moral influence, its visitors to act as they have done, other influences must have been at work. I do not disparage the Christian ministry; that has done much; and I think London has been as much favoured in respect of its ministry, both in the Establishment and out of it, as almost any city of the empire—more favoured perhaps in our own day than in any previous. But whilst we mention the more ostensible and obvious influences, there have been two things in London before the Great Exhibition; and one of these has been our City Mission, and the other, the Sabbath School system. Both of these have sprung up within a period comparatively recent. They have been the best—the religious police of the metropolis. Without their moralizing and wholesome influence, I fear we could not have looked back this evening with so much complacency and thankfulness to the past.

These things I mention, and throw out that, we may connect the right

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causes with that result which no man denies. The result is obvious, the cause is what we are called to think upon. And when we look to those secondary causes, we do all the more honour to that Great First Cause from whom all these others proceeded. It is not my province, though it may be my propensity, to look forward, and to say that we are now, in the kind providence of God, come to what I trust is a new era in the history of nations; and that our competitions and contests are henceforward to be of a different sort from times that are past; and that instead of mere trials of animal strength, or mere trials of physical courage, we shall have a better contest—a contest in which American adroitness, and French elegance, and English solidity and industry will all contribute their quota to the world's common weal; and that thus working together under the "Prince of Peace," we shall all come more and more to recognize our common brotherhood—and by making it more worth while to keep the peace, will make it more and more impossible for our rulers to carry us into war.

This is the result that I trust will come out from these expositions of the skill of the nations; and still more from the blessed and softening influence of the intercourse of the representatives of all nations coming together. Themes are abundant, and it would be very easy to expatiate; but I fear to wax desultory. I am content, sir, with throwing out these simple hints; and whilst tendering our acknowledgments for God's goodness to us as a people, I feel that as one I owe gratitude to him, and to his servants under him, for having originated the idea of sanctifying these great assemblies by the ministering of the word and by prayer. Blessed results have attended the preaching in Exeter Hall; and I doubt not that similar results to visitors have attended the preaching of the word in the stated places of worship; and I hope and trust—indeed I know, as far as one can know from appearances—that when the Lord writes up the people, it shall be recorded of this one and that other, that he was born, even here; and thus the place that has been long dedicated to the celebrations of Christian societies, and the promotion of works of philanthropy, shall have received yet a higher blessing from above—the baptism of the Holy Spirit, that highest and truest consecration that a place receives when souls are brought to the knowledge of Jesus Christ.

The REV. DR. COX gave out the following hymn, which was also sung by the assembly:

Shine, mighty God! on Britain shine,
With beams of heavenly grace;

Reveal thy power through all our coasts,

And show thy smiling face.

Amidst our isle, exalted high,

Do thou our glory stand;

And like a wall of guardian fire,

Surround the favour'd land.

When shall thy name, from shore to shore,

Sound all the earth abroad?

And distant nations know and love

Their Saviour and their God?

Sing to the Lord, ye distant lands,

Sing loud, with solemn voice;

While British tongues exalt his praise,

And British hearts rejoice.

God the Redeemer scatters round

His choicest favours here;

While the creation's utmost bound

Shall see, adore, and fear.

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The REV. J. BALDWIN BROWN was the next speaker. He addressed the Meeting as follows:—

The success of the Great Exhibition is the subject on which I have to address you. It seems something like a platitude to talk about it. It is an accomplished fact. It has written for itself so clear a record that much talk about it seems superfluous; yet our sentiments about its success still have a certain vagueness. We are still too much filled with wonderment for calm and settled thought. It is worth our while to ask quietly what has succeeded—what elements have wrought so victoriously in the production of that dazzling result, the memory of which we all cherish fondly as childhood's dreams—the Great Exhibition.

First, I feel it a fair question, which some in this assembly even might be inclined to ask, "What business have you, a Christian minister, to a religious meeting with the success of the Great Exhibiton? It is a worldly thing, it is the world's triumph not yours; let the world enjoy it and be proud of it; keep you to your spiritual work." For myself, I never felt nearer to spiritual work, than when endeavouring to celebrate in a religious assembly the success of the Great Exhibition. I doubt whether it be not on the whole the least worldly thing, which, in the world at any rate, this age has witnessed. I doubt whether anything has ever come forth out of the world, which has developed nobler and manlier qualities than this Great Exhibition. And this deep and strong stirring of the stagnant waters of man's life, the agitation, excitement, movement of society out of which it sprang forth, attracts imperatively the church's attention, and should secure its earnest interest in the effort and its results. Ever when there is a moving of the waters is the time for moral and spiritual work. All movement has an element of hope in it, and tenderly and lovingly as a nurse cherishes a child, should the church cherish all honest and true worldly activity and progress, and seek to lead that progress up to God. The church has suffered too long from want of sympathy with the world's condition and movements, caring nothing for the objects for which the masses of men have been toiling and struggling in their blind, dim way. God brings good, order, progress, out of all, and the church, God's handmaiden on earth, is set to help him, and never turn a cold ear or heart to any cry that comes deep out of the labouring spirit of the world. We believe that all moving and troubling of the waters is of God. Now in judgment, now in mercy and love. Of the last is this. God has stirred some of the highest and noblest elements of worldly activity and has brought them forth. We hail them, and are met to-night to triumph before God in the success which they have achieved. The success it appears is marvellous, miraculous. That an enterprize at first received so coldly by the most influential, and having to harmonize the interest of so many selfish and self-centred communities, should have triumphed over every obstacle, and chained them all to its car of victory, is wonderful. Earth will long remember this success as we remember a beautiful dream. The success is more like that which we dream of when the unruly and unmanageable flesh is sunk in slumber and only the busy constructive spirit is awake and at work, than the maimed and mangled success which we meet with, and are fain to rejoice over in this work-day world. It is a success which is hardly of man, but rather of God, the all ruling, the all conquering, and to my mind it shows the interest which he has had in the work.

I shall never forget one morning, when from an eminence, some miles distant, which commands a view of all South and West London, I was gazing over the dreary bank of smoke and fog with which a fresh east wind had shrouded the whole. Suddenly the mist parted and a flash of glorious brilliancy lit up the scene. I asked a friend with me in wonder, what was the

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cause? He told me it was the sun flashing on the crystal dome of the Exhibition. Brighter far than ever I saw the "Mountain of light," that star flashed through the smoke and dust of this busy arena of the world's strife and toil. So brightly shall gleam for ages I thought on the world's bosom, amidst the sweat of her toilings and the smoke of her forges, the jewel of this year's achievements; yea, so gleams and glows in the deeps of heaven from this year onward the star of the destiny of the world. Pleasant and easy would it be to dwell on the success of the enterprize in an industrial or commercial point of view. Human industry has at length achieved for itself a patent of nobility; that Exhibition is its badge of heraldry; henceforth it bears on earth an ennobled name. I suppose that its contemplated purpose as a school of education has been largely successful. I suppose that its success as a market in which the products of talent, genius, or toil, have brought their price and rewarded their producers with the material of future toil has been signal. I say, I suppose these things; I know but little about them, nor is it the industrial and commercial success which has crowned it that awakens my sympathy and gladdens my heart to-night. I am speaking to those who value the deeper moral and spiritual elements of human activity beyond those to which I have referred; and I confess that on the moral elements of that success which has crowned this Exhibition, my thought is centred now. Let us try to estimate the amount of moral activity represented in that Exhibition, that we may know why, not as men and women of the world, but as men and women of the church, profoundly interested in all which promises to add to the world's moral activity, we should rejoice in its success.

1. This success is the triumph of manhood, manly energy, wisdom, patience and power. Good is it in these days of talk to behold a thing which is pure and unsophisticated work. The effort of the passing age (may we not speak of it as past? is not a new age dawning, of which this year we have heard the signal bell?) has been to live in speech rather than work. Talk, fine talk, the finest perhaps the world has ever listened to, but talk still. But here stands before us a thing which is the offspring of work, manly work, and that alone. Never since the curse of toil as it is called, but which we ought to read as a blessing, was laid on man's life, has so great a mass of its fruit been gathered. Sweat of brow, brain, and heart, have gone to make up this exposition. Talent, toiling patiently through long years to educate itself; skill, mental and bodily, won by stern unrepining, persevering work has there expressed itself; genius, starving through days and years of expectation for lack of opportunity, has there proclaimed itself. I love to think on the gorgeous dress with which work has clothed itself—the gleaming and glancing splendour of the spectacle which bursts upon the sight on entering those palace halls; but I love, brethren, to think of the faithful, honest, sinewy toil that was behind and beneath it, which the dress ought to adorn only, not to hide. If work, hard work, honest work, work which knows what to be at, and how to achieve it, has any moral virtue in it; if by means of work, not blind and blundering, but skilled and purposeful work, a part of God's education of humanity is going on, then let us rejoice in the spectacle of the world's best work successfully gathered, and the stimulus imparted by the perfect and beautiful spectacle to nobler achievement in this department of man's vital activity in ages to come. We rejoice that our age has seen the gathering of the net results of the world's worldly activity through all these bygone years, in which God has been so busy with the moral, mental, civil, and social advancement of man. I find it hard to prevent my subject from clashing with a succeeding one which speaks of the future. The real success of any enterprise lies in its promise of fruit. But I keep myself as much as possible to a present and realized success. I suppose that practical talent and capability were never at such a premium as during the year which is closing. I suppose that puffery and quackery have seldom received such a blow as in the demand for actual performance which the Exhibition everywhere put forth. The way in which talent appeared in abundance at the call of necessity—in which works the hardest and most tremendous were daringly undertaken and successfully done by men able for the work—the way in which

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every effort was crowned with success, because manly energy and faculty in all earnestness enlisted on its side, is God's most solemn preaching to us of the central truth of commerce, "the tools to him that can handle them"—the most solemn and earnest preaching of it which has been heard by our age. The church has everything to gain from this. Not directly and palpably, (let us not confound the building of a palace of industry, and the conviction of a conscience) but not the less surely. Every successful effort of man to discover his true sphere of social activity, to set before himself the dignity of his own calling or craft in life, to realize the fact that success must build itself on performance and not on pretension is a step up and on; and hence we count it matter of all joy, that in the success of the Exhibition we see the success of manly energy, patience, toil, and hope. It is a triumph of manhood, one of the fairest worldly triumphs which it has achieved. Man never be tempted to dabble in blood the peaceful garland which he has now bound around his brows.

2. The second moral element in this success, is the willingness which it has called forth, developed, and crowned with victory. It is the most successful display of the willingness of man that the world has ever witnessed. Grand in its proportions, splendid in its aspects, incalculably fruitful in its results, good-will has made it all. A word went forth from the mind and heart of a man who is worthily a Prince—few men in our age have shown deeper springs of mental and moral vitality than he of whom I speak, and that word wakened, echoes everywhere; not in the governments—not in the soldiery, not in the police, not in the bureaucracy of continental kingdoms, but in the free will of men. Some were sceptical, some were fainthearted, some were cold. But everywhere the idea warmed, kindled, convinced, and wakened the good will of men. Since the preaching of good will there never has been an enterprize which has triumphed so signally; and its triumph has been gained through the good will of the human race. Everywhere in the world, in every city, willing hearts and hands were at work for its realization. Money could not have done it; governments could not have done it; cannon could not have done it; nothing but good-will could have done it. Hence, as lovers of what is free, generous, spontaneous in human thought and action, we rejoice in its success. We rejoice that something which is not dressed in scarlet, which is not heralded by the braying of trumpets, or decked with the pomp and blazonry of war, has succeeded in awakening universal sympathy to an extent previously unknown. We rejoice that a great idea has laid under constraint and possessed itself of a broader field of human thought, will, and work, than any mechanical, mercenary, or even commercial enterprize could have reached. That palace is clear and stainless from fraud, violence, and blood, as the crystal which clothes it. It has triumphed signally, marvellously; but its triumph has been the fruit of the awakened free will of the world. There has been something beyond the mercenary and selfish in the hearts of all who have set their hands to it. Its success has tended to redeem one age from the influence of a cold and calculating selfishness, and open vistas of the future of commerce on which we may not dwell.

3. This Exhibition has realized, that is, has succeeded in taking out of the region of abstraction, and putting into the region of fact, some elements at any rate, of the brotherhood of man. Nothing since the Crusades has stirred so widely European society. Nothing has ever stirred so widely the society of the world. The attraction of all European nations to Palestine in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and the attraction of all nations to London, the centre of the world's commerce in this, presents some striking parallels. Dark and bloody are the pages of the Crusaders' history. Precious are the fruits which those mad entreprizes bore to the world. It was Europe's feeling after brotherhood, expressed in the warlike terms which were then so current; it realized and consolidated the unity of Christendom; it broke the bonds of feudalism; it prepared the way for modern monarchy. St. Louis, the last notable Crusader, was the first of modern monarchs. Far otherwise, far greater, far nobler and more peacefully fruitful is the gathering here. We must be careful when we talk about brotherhood, lest we talk weakly and

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falsely. We cannot believe that real deep brotherly feeling and love animated the bosom of even the majority of strangers who flocked to our shores. We must not expect that. We must not expect that this brotherhood of which men talk and dream will grow like the mushroom [of a night]. Slow, powerful, agonizing are the pangs out of which moral realities are born. Two things go to make up brotherhood. First, the deep community of nature ; and, second, the sympathies which grow up silently and unconsciously by familiar intercourse, common studies, sports, and pursuits. The first of these Christianity has taken in charge, "*Ye all are brethren;*" "*Ye are all one in Christ Jesus.*" There is the deep root of human brotherhood. But I think that this Exhibition has succeeded in developing the rudiment, at any rate of the other element. We err in expecting Christianity alone, or civilization and commerce alone to make men brethren. Christianity furnishes the principle, but commerce and social intercourse do their part ; they nourish sympathies and promote familiarity ; and it is out of both, in combination, that practical brotherhood will spring. That this idea has succeeded in enlisting hands and hearts in all quarters of the world to work out a common end—that out of deep wildernesses, virgin forests, sea-girt isles, blazing deserts, and polar frosts, man has sent his contribution to the world's common work, does not so much establish or strengthen the principle of brotherhood, as promote the intercourse which gives birth to familiarity, which makes brotherhood not an idea, but a common household thing. And this is what we want, and for this let us be thankful. His will be a tremendous work who sets himself to break the net-work thus woven round the family of man. It may be broken. Nothing but Christianity can establish a fraternity that will never be infringed. We fear that before the world's destiny be accomplished it will be broken ; but the tendrils rudely snapped will twine and unite again ; the principle of cohesion is at work. Men have been working for each other. This year has given them the means of saying it, and showing it. Its success is, that it has called forth and developed such universal human community, and realized for the first time a common outward bond of the whole human world. Its success, its crown of pride is that every human community is represented in it. Sundered as they may be by language, manners, morals, social condition, government, antipathies, hatred—all gave way, and the tide of human interest set bodily from every quarter of the human world to our shores. For many generations commerce has been weaving bonds of sympathy and connection between distant communities. But it wanted expression and recognition. This Exhibition has succeeded, spite of fearful difficulties, in realizing it, showing how firm, sure, and universal is the net-work of reciprocal good offices which God has been weaving silently all around the world. "*And who seeth not in all these that the hand of the Lord hath done this, in whose hand is the soul of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind?*" "*It is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes.*"

Christianity and civilization, commerce, social order, go hand in hand. We, as Christians, cannot be unmindful of anything which affects the social welfare and progress of the human race. Moreover, we see the dawning of a new and benigner era. We hear the death-knell of many social wrongs and vices sounding. We see through the mists of morning, which some in their blindness mistake for the glooms of night that Sun of Righteousness climbing to the zenith, which shall bathe the whole world in its lustre, and make it glad and beautiful as once was Eden in the bosom of its God. We see this dawning ; we go forth to hail it ; to sing before God its matin song— "*Hosanna, blessed be the age that cometh in the name of the Lord.*" We know that this age shall see the end of the devil's empire, the expulsion of the demons that have convulsed society and tormented man, the establishment of the kingdom of truth and peace, of joy and love in a word, the coronation of Christ the King. Then shall the vesper song of this closing era of earth's fruitful histories sound from ten thousand thousand voices, and waken echoes in every region of the universe of God— "*The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our God and of his Christ. Hallelujah! Hallelujah! the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth.*"

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The REV. JOHN BURNET then read the following hymn :—

Praise to thee, thou great Creator !
Praise be thine from every tongue;
Join, my soul, with every creature,
Join the universal song.

Father ! source of all compassion !
Pure, unbounded grace is thine ;
Hail the God of our salvation !
Praise him for his love divine !

For ten thousand blessings given,
For the hope of future joy,
Sound his praise through earth and heaven,
Sound Jehovah's praise on high.

Joyfully on earth adore him,
Till in heaven our song we raise ;
There, enraptured, fall before him,
Lost in wonder, love, and praise.

The REV. THOMAS BINNEY read the twenty-fourth Psalm—

- 1 The earth is the **LORD**'s, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein.
- 2 For he hath founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the floods.
- 3 Who shall ascend into the hill of the **Lord**? or who shall stand in his holy place?
- 4 He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart ; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully.
- 5 He shall receive the blessing from the **LORD**, and righteousness from the God of his salvation.
- 6 This is the generation of them that seek him, that seek thy face, O Jacob. Selah.
- 6 Lift up your heads, O ye gates ; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors : and the King of glory shall come in.
- 8 Who is this King of glory ? The **LORD** strong and mighty, the **LORD** mighty in battle.
- 9 Lift up your heads, O ye gates ; even lift them up, ye everlasting doors ; and the King of glory shall come in.
- 10 Who is this King of glory ? The **LORD** of hosts, he is the King of glory. Selah.

In the course of the prayer which succeeded, Mr. Binney remarked—“Bless those, O God, who came together in love, to rejoice in what their eyes saw of the wonders of this earth, and all the faculties thou hast given to man ; and having brought them together in loving intercourse, we pray that the blessed results which shall flow from it, may be seen many days hence throughout all nations. God save the Queen, endow her with thy grace, cause her long to live blessed and happy, as a queen, a mother, and a wife. Bless the Prince Albert. We desire to give thee thanks that he standeth related to us, as a nation, in the manner that he doth—that thou hast given us one so intimate and so near to the sovereign, who is so endowed with such faculties and desires, which are all on the side of knowledge, intelligence, and peace, and the promotion of that intercourse between nation and nation, which may preserve the tranquillity of the world. We desire, O Lord, to give thee thanks in all that we have seen in the coming together of the nations to this metropolis : in the quietness and tranquillity of large masses of people—that no jealousies, and no feelings of hostility have been called

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forth. And we bless thee that so much has been done by the philanthropy and religion of those who desired to promote the spiritual welfare of the world—for the distribution of books and tracts—for the preaching of the gospel in many languages, to men of many lands. We bless thee that we have reason to believe that so much impression has been made, that so much seed has been scattered about, and we pray, O Lord, that in the day when all things shall be revealed, it may then be seen that many souls have been raised from death to life, in connection with the various services in this and other places in connection with the great wonder of the year and of the age. We beseech thee to hear us, O Lord, in these, our thanksgivings, and to accept our supplications and prayers. O, give peace in our time, and in all time; promote the unity of the world; diffuse the knowledge of thy truth; enlarge thy church; convert the nations; destroy all gods that have not made the earth and the heavens from beneath the heavens, that thy name may be known, and that thou mayest be universally feared; that thy predictions to prophets may be believed, and that the world may be converted unto thee. Help us, O God, to live with deeper earnestness, to put heart and hand, with brave, determined resolve, to whatever thou hast given us to do. And grant that all of us now in this place may find mercy of the Lord, so that after we have done the work allotted to us here, and been gathered to our fathers, we may at last unite together in the great meeting of the nations, with those that shall come out of every nation, and people, and tongue, and be permitted to stand before thy throne, and to engage there in thy worship and service, and be filled with thy fulness, and be blessed in thy presence, for ever and ever, for the Lord's sake." Amen.

The REV. WILLIAM BROCK then delivered the following address. He said:—I should like to relate an incident. A few days after the close of the Great Exhibition, a friend of mine, on the top of a public vehicle, was thus accosted by the driver—"Now, sir, isn't it wonderful, I have been driving up and down this great thoroughfare all through this summer, several times a day, and have neither met with any accident, nor seen one, nor heard of one. There must have been something more than *our* care in all that, Sir. I really think the Almighty himself must have taken care of the people." When I heard of this incident, Mr. Chairman, I thought, first, that, omnibus drivers may deserve much more of a good man's esteem than they generally obtain, and then I thought, secondly, that the driver in the present instance was to be regarded as a fair exponent of a large mass of public sentiment. I believe there is a general impression pervading the community, that we are under most weighty obligations to the Almighty for deliverance from what may be deemed, the special jeopardies of the Great Exhibition. At all events, that impression pervades the present meeting. We feel that, indeed, "it is a good thing to give thanks," at the remembrance of what, God has wrought. It is well known that in the prospect of the Great Exhibition, fears and forebodings were somewhat extensively felt and proclaimed; in many cases they were entertained, we have no doubt, unreasonably. There was no adequate occasion for them to the extent to which they prevailed. At the same time, under the entirely unprecedented circumstances of the case, we were not surprised at such forebodings. It was a very natural thing that people should be afraid. Perhaps most who are now present were more or less apprehensive that something or other, untoward and disasterous, would occur. How

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earnestly we prayed to him who worketh all things according to the counsel of his own will ! We meet to-night to acknowledge that in his mercy he heard our prayer. We think of deliverance from accidents within and without the Crystal Palace, and we see God's mercy there. True, everything was done in the construction of the building that, in this highly scientific age, could be done, to prevent accident : and so everything was done in the arrangements for those who, in such numbers, but with such fluctuations, were to traverse the building. All this is true. But for that skill and sience, as well as for the successful application, we are indebted to the Lord our God. Never did we use the Psalmist's language with more propriety than now—" Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it." Greatly shall we err when, thinking that there was no flaw in the material, no mishap in the erection, no catastrophe in the occupation of the building, if we do not attribute it to the Most High. Now, a little matter would have occasioned mischief, at the thought of which, we tremble. But once was there a momentary rush, once, however, there was that dreaded rush, the continuance of which, as the authorities assure us, would have been fearful. It was arrested, mercifully, almost as soon as it began. But once was danger apparent from without ; once, however, it was most apparent. A balloon getting away as it arose in the immediate neighbourhood of the Palace, had nearly, with its power of Gas unexpended, come down right through that glorious transept, bringing ruin and devastation in its train. It did not come. And as we think, we say instinctively, " thank God." We will thank him, not only for that deliverance, but for others quite as signal, if not more so, though to ourselves unknown. We think of deliverance from epidemic disease, and we see God's mercy there. How memorable the health of the metropolis during the period of the Great Exhibition ! It was feared, not perhaps unnaturally, that the influx of such multitudes, among a population already overcrowded, and at the season of the year when the heat was at its hight, would generate or aggravate disease. Several collateral considerations augmented the force of the fears, that we should be visited with "the pestilence which worketh in darkness," and of the "destruction which wasteth at noon-day;" but what has been the fact ? Never has London been healthier than during the past summer : and we point to the bills of mortality, not in mournfulness to say—" We are consumed by thine anger, and by thy wrath are we troubled ;" but in holy joyfulness to say, from the "terror by night," hast thou delivered us, and from "the arrow that flieth by day." "The Lord has done great things for us, whereof we are glad." We think of deliverance from disturbance in our public streets, and we see God's mercy there ! What crowds have thronged our great thoroughfares, and what strange diversity among those crowds ! By how many casualties might they have become embroiled ! Of what wicked schemes might they, unwittingly, have become the victims ! What manifold necessity might have arisen for the employment of our police, if not of our military force ! Precautions, we believe, were wisely taken to provide for such necessity, but it did not arise. There was not even an approach to it. Never was our metropolis quieter, either by night or by day. On the highest authority, in such matters, I have been assured that there has been even less than the ordinary amount of quarrelling and noisy strife ; neither on account of the grosser or the minor crimes have our courts been ever less in requisition, although temptations and opportunities for their perpetration, have abounded on every

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side. This too is of the Lord. He held the passions of men within his own power. When again, and yet again a crisis was approaching, there were the hidings of his power, he dispersed the elements of mischief which were floating about in our metropolis, so that through a year of unexampled liability to disquiet, it has been a year, all things considered, of unexampled peace.

We think of deliverance from political convulsion, and we see God's mercy there. Intimations were at one time rife, that the season would be one of deep-laid and direful conspiracies, involving amongst other calamities the assassination of our beloved Queen. Here was to be gathered the leaders of violent revolutions, and here was to be set on foot the immediate and reckless overthrow of dignitaries and thrones. Perhaps there was reason for this apprehension ; we do not know ; but perhaps there was. However, we have heard of no violence, no conspiracies, no confederation of the emissaries of anarchy against the good order of good commonwealths. I am in a position to say that everything has been done that a vigorous and patriotic government could do, to ascertain what has actually been going on : and no mischief has been going on. The men, gathered here from countries where there is despotism—grievous, God-dishonouring despotism, have not used the opportunity for the reckless subversion of the despotism. They may have taken counsel—and why not ? But it has been taken in grave and solemn deliberation, and in deliberation all the more grave and solemn, from their observations of our great national institutions, which bind the sovereign and the subject so reciprocally, which unites so condensely the enjoyment of liberty with the maintenance of law. Our Sovereign has not even been insulted. We must say more. She has been saluted by the nation's loyalty, she has become identified with the nation's sympathies, she has secured, as monarch never did secure, the love of a nation's heart ; and our foreign visitors have seen this, seen it, we trust, so as to go home and teach their countrymen to trace causes to their effects—that the book is better than the bayonet, that the Exchange is more available than the camp,—that Protestantism can do what Popery never tries to do—that the Bible surpasses the lives of all the saints put together—that spiritual Christianity has “the promise, both of the life that now is, as well as of that which is to come.” We have not only to thank God for preventing the occurrence of all political convulsions during the progress of the Exhibition, we have to thank him, too, for the influences engendered by the Exhibition ; whereby such convulsions will be prevented in time to come.

We think of deliverances from aggravated profligacy and we see God's mercy there. Too deplorable for anything but the deepest sorrowings is the prevalent profligacy of this metropolis. It was feared that it would be intensely aggravated. Arrangements, we were told, were actually made whereby the wickedness of the wicked would be displayed beyond all precedent in this land. It was a mistake. God was better to us far than our fears in this respect also. What no human authority could have attempted, his intent influences have positively prevented. I have the evidence at hand that the haunts of the infamous have not proportionately increased, and that the visitors to these haunts have not been at all as numerous as the influx of visitors and the excitement of the season would have led us fairly to expect surely the Lord's hand has been here also. In this matter we were shut up to him ; “vain was the help of man ; our sufficiency was of God.”

And thus, my brethren, altogether will we again and yet again thank God. It was he whose providence gave us in the person of the Prince Consort such an effective advocate of a world-wide philanthropy. It was he who ordained and arranged the ten thousand complex influences which have been in action from first to last. It was he who arrested dangers of which perchance we had no conception. It was he who secured for the Exhibition a commencement so auspicious, who has conducted it along a course so ineffably satisfactory, and who has brought it to such a termination as to lead the world looking on to say—“It is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes.”

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The REV. J. B. BROWN announced the following Psalm, which was sung with much feeling :—

All people that on earth do dwell,
Sing to the Lord with cheerful voice;
Him serve with mirth, his praise forth tell,
Come ye before him and rejoice.

Know that the Lord is God indeed :
Without our aid he did us make :
We are his flock, he doth us feed,
And for his sheep he doth us take.

O enter then his gates of praise ;
Approach with joy his courts unto ;
Praise, laud, and bless his name always,
For it is seemly so to do.

For why ? the Lord our God is good,
His mercy is for ever sure ;
His truth at all times firmly stood,
And shall from age to age endure.

The REV. JOHN BURNET having offered prayer, the Doxology was sung, and the meeting dispersed.

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- 921 _____ The christian in affliction.
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